

## Sūrah Al-An‘ām

(The Cattle)

[Sūratul-An‘ām was revealed in Makkah and it has 165 Verses and 20 Sections]

Verses 1 - 5

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
 الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ  
 وَالنُّورَ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ  
 مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ مُّتَرَدُّونَ  
 ﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ يُعَلِّمُ سِرَّكُمْ  
 وَجَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ  
 رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا  
 جَاءَهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَاءُ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٥﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light, yet those who disbelieve equate (others) with their Lord. [1] He is the one who created you from clay, then destined a term. And the fixed term lies with Him, yet you are in doubt. [2] He is Allah in the heavens and the earth. He knows what you conceal and what you reveal and He knows what you earn. [3] And there does not come to them a sign from the signs of their Lord, but they keep turning away from it. [4] So, they have belied the truth when it came to them. Now, there shall come to them the full account of what they have been laughing at. [5]

## Commentary

Sayyidna 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that one of the distinctions of Sūrah Al-An'ām is that the whole of it, except some 'Āyāt, was revealed at one time in Makkah with the complement of seventy thousand angels following it with recitation of the name of Allah. Early *Tafsīr* authorities Mujāhid, al-Kalbi, Qatādah and others have said more or less the same thing.

Abū Ishāq Al-Asfrā'īnī has said that this Sūrah consists of all principles and subsidiaries of Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah). This Sūrah has been prefaced with: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (Al-Ḥamdulillah) whereby people have been told that all praises belong to Allah. The purpose is to educate and help people get the right perspective - that Allah needs no praise from anyone, whether or not anyone praises Him, He is, in terms of His own intrinsic perfection, by Himself, the Praised One. By bringing in the sentence which follows immediately, which mentions the creation of the heavens and the earth and the darkness and the light, given there is the very proof of His being the Praised One. Isn't it that the Being which holds such Power and Wisdom would have to be the One deserving of all praise?

In this verse, 'samāwāt' (heavens) has been mentioned in the plural while 'arḍ' (earth), in the singular - though, in another verse (65:12), earth has been identified as being seven like the heavens. Perhaps, it is indicative of the mutual distinction the seven heavens have in terms of their form and attributes while the seven earths are like each other, therefore, they were taken as one in number. (Mazharī)

Similarly, by mentioning 'zulumāt' (darkness, or layers of darkness) in the plural, and 'nūr' (light) in the singular, the indication given may be that *nūr* or light signifies the correct way and the straight path - and that is just one, while *zulumāt*, or many layers of darkness, signifies the path of error - and their number runs in thousands. (Mazharī & al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt)

Also noticeable here is that the origination of the heavens and the earth has been expressed through the word, 'khalāqa' (created) while that of darkness and light with the word, 'ja'ala' (made). The hint implied is that darkness and light are not independent and self-existent like the heavens and the earth, instead, they are contingents and at-

tributes. And *zulumāt* (darkness) has been given precedence over *nūr* (light) perhaps because *zulumāt* is basic to this world while *nūr* is associated with particulars - when they are there, there is light; and when they are not there, there is darkness.

By pointing out to the reality of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) and its open proof in this verse the purpose is to warn all those peoples who do not simply believe in *Tauḥīd*, or have forsaken the reality of *Tauḥīd* despite professing it.

The Magians (*Majūs*) believe in two creators, *Yazdān* and *Ahriman* (or *Ahriman*). *Yazdān*, according to them, is the creator of good and *Ahriman*, the creator of evil. They also identify these as (the principles of) light and darkness.

The polytheists in India take an incredibly high number of gods as partners in the divinity of God. The Aryā Samājists, despite acknowledging *Tauḥīd*, take spirit and matter to be infinitely pre-existent, and independent of the power and creation of God, whereby they have moved way away from the reality of *Tauḥīd*. Similarly, the Christians who, despite professing the creed of *Tauḥīd*, started taking Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام and his blessed mother as partners in the divinity of God - and then, in order to prop their belief in one God, they had to rely on the irrational theory of Unity in Trinity. As for the disbelievers and polytheists of Arabia, they demonstrated such philanthropy in dishing out Godhood that, according to them, every piece of rock on a hill could be good enough to become an object of worship for the whole human-kind! Thus, the wonderful human being whom Allah had made to be the noblest of His creation, someone whom the whole universe was to serve, went so astray from the right path that he took - not just the moon, the sun, the stars, but the fire, water, trees and rocks too - even crawling insects as objects of prostration and worship, providers of needs and resolvers of problems.

By saying in this verse of the Holy Qur‘ān that Allah Ta‘ālā is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and He is the Maker of darkness and light, all such false notions have been refuted - when He is the sole Creator and Maker of everything, ascribing partners to His Divinity makes no sense.

In the first verse, by saying that all those great bodies of things in this big universe created by Allah Ta'ālā on Whom they depend, an open and correct lesson has been given to all human beings. After that, in other verses which follow, human beings have been told that their very own being is a small universe. If one were to make a start from this point, right from the beginning to the end - birth, living, death among a great mesh of internal dimensions and distances - it would show that the belief in the Oneness of Allah is a reality all too clear. It is about this that the verse said: هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا (He is the One who created you from clay, then destined a term). The verse is saying that Allah is the One who created Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام with clay, and then, gave him life - and common human food comes from the moist substance of clay, and from food the sperm, and from the sperm comes the creation of the human being.

Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه says that he has heard from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah Ta'ālā created Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام from a particular blend of clay included wherein are essential ingredients of the whole earth. This is the reason why the children of Ādam are different in colour, shape, morals and habits with some black or white or red, and some hard or soft or good-natured or evil-tempered. (Maḥzarī, from a narration of Ibn 'Adiyy, with good authority)

This was about the human origin. After that, mentioned here are the two stages at the end. One of these is the personal end of a human being which is called death. The other stage is the combined end of the entire humankind along with that of all cosmic servants waiting on them, which is known as the *Qiyāmah* (the day of Doom). The expression - 'the personal end of a human being' - is used here because Allah Ta'ālā says: ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا that is, after the birth of a human being, Allah Ta'ālā destined a term for his or her life (on the earth). Reaching the completion of this term is death - though human beings do not know it - but, the angels do. In fact, a human being too, in a way, knows death as incidents of the children of Ādam dying all around, everywhere, all the time, are common experience.

After that, comes the mention of the end of the whole world, that is, the *Qiyāmah*, in the following words: وَأَجَلٌ مُّتَّسِقٌ عَلَيْهَا, that is, there is yet another term which stands fixed and which is known to Allah

alone. The full knowledge of this 'term' has not been given to any angel, or human being.

Summing up in a sequence, we can say that, in the first verse, we have been told about the 'big universe', that is, the whole wide world, which has been created and made by Allah Ta'ālā. Then, in the second verse, very similarly, we have been told that the 'small universe', that is, the human beings, have also been created by Allah. Then, it is to shake human beings out of their negligence that they have been told that every human being has a particular age, after which death is certain. This is a constant fact of life observed by human beings all the time. The words: وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ مُنْجَرُونَ (And the fixed term lies with Him, yet you are in doubt) carry the instruction that using the personal death of a human being as the proof of the general and collective death of the whole world system, that is, the *Qiyāmah*, is something very natural and logical. Therefore, there is absolutely no doubt about the coming of the *Qiyāmah* (the much publicized but least believed 'Apocalypse' of the West). Therefore, towards the end of the verse (2), the text wonders as to why would people keep doubting the coming of *Qiyāmah* which stands proved so clearly.

The third verse contains the consequential outcome of what was said in the first two verses. It declares that Allah is the only Being who is worthy of worship and obedience in all the heavens and the earth, and He is the One who knows everything human beings conceal or reveal and, particularly, everything they say or do.

The fourth verse carries a complaint against the anti-truth doggedness and obstinacy of the chronically heedless human race by saying: وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنَ آيَةٍ مِّنَ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ that is, despite the many clear proofs and open signs of the Oneness of Allah, the dissenters and rejectionists among human beings have taken to a way of their own, using which, they would turn their faces away from whatever sign is shown to them for their guidance, without ever paying the least attention to it.

In the fifth and the last verse here, further details of this heedlessness have been indicated through some events. It was said: فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ (So, they have belied the truth when it came to them). The word, '*Al-Haqq*' (the truth) here, could mean the Qur'an - and the

blessed person of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also.

The reason is that he lived his whole life among these Arab tribes. He grew up from a child into a young man and from his youth into his later years right before their eyes. They also knew fully well that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had remained absolutely untaught by any human teacher, so much so that he could not write even his name by himself. The whole Arabia knew him by his appellation of *Ummiyy* (unlettered, unschooled). For forty years, this was him amongst them.

He never demonstrated any marked interest in poetry (a traditional distinction of the age) nor he had any aptitude for formal education and learning. Then, after having completed his forty years, there came a sudden change, an instant flowering of the unimaginable. His blessed tongue became such fountainhead of insights and realities, learning and arts that went on to disarm the best minds of the world. He challenged every eloquent and learned master of words in Arabia to match the Word brought by him. But his antagonists, who would have not hesitated to sacrifice anything they had - life, wealth, honour, children, family, anything, anytime - just to defeat him, did not have the courage to accept his challenge and, at the least, produce one 'Āyah (verse) like the 'Āyah of the Holy Qur‘ān.

Thus, the very presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the Glorious Qur‘ān, was a great sign of irrefutable legitimacy. In addition to that, there were thousands of miracles and open signs which came to pass at his blessed hands and which cannot be denied by any sane person. But, those people belied all such signs totally. Therefore, it was said in the verse: فَكَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ (So, they have belied the truth when it came to them).

Now, pointed out at the conclusion of the verse is the sad end of their effort to falsify truth: فَسَوْفَ يُأْتِيهِمْ آتِنَا مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (Now, there shall come to them the full account of what they have been laughing at). It means that right now these people who are heedless to their fate mock at the miracles and commandments of Allah brought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and at the all true message that there is a *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday) and *Ākhirah* (Hereafter), but very soon will come the time when all these realities will be before their eyes. There will be a *Qiyāmah* in fact. There will be a Reckoning (*Hisāb*) when everyone will

have to account for one's faith and deed - and everyone shall get the reward or punishment for what he or she has done. But, believing and confessing at that time is not going to work for them because that will be no day of deeds - rather, that day will be the day of Retribution. The time to think is now. Allah Almighty has given the respite - a God-sent piece of luck, so to say. Act now, for it is by having faith alone that you will succeed in this world and in the lasting world to come.

### Verses 6 - 11

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّكَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
 مَا لَمْ يُمَكِّنْ لَكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِدْرَارًا وَجَعَلْنَا  
 الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ  
 بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ  
 فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ  
 ﴿٧﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْ لَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكَاً لَقُضِيَ  
 الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكَاً لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا  
 وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَا يَلْبَسُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَى بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ  
 قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ  
 ﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ أَنْظِرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ  
 الْمُكْذِبِينَ ﴿١١﴾

Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed prior to them, whom We had given in the land a position We did not give to you, and We left the heaven pouring over them and made rivers flow beneath them? Then We destroyed them because of their sins and raised up, after them, another generation. [6]

And if We had sent down to you something written on paper, and they had even touched it with their hands, still the disbelievers would have said, "This is nothing but sheer magic." [7]

**And they say, “Why is it that an angel has not been sent down to him?” And had We sent down an angel, the whole matter would have been finished, and thereafter they would have had no time. [8] And if We had made him an angel, We would have obviously made him a man, and would have caused them the same confusion they are causing now. [9]**

**Messengers have been mocked at before you. So, those who laughed at them were besieged by what they have been making a mockery of. [10]**

**Say, “Go about the earth, and see what was the fate of those who belied (the prophets).” [11]**

### **Commentary**

In previous verses, mention was made of grave consequences to be faced by those who avoid or oppose Divine commandments and prophetic teachings. In the present verses, the same deniers of the truth have been given an opportunity to learn and correct themselves by observing conditions around them as well as those prevailing in times before them. No doubt, events of the past are documents full of chastening lessons which, if seen to find wisdom, would prove to be more effective than a thousand sermons. So, still valid is the saying of the sage: The world is the best book and time, the best teacher. That is why wisdom-based historical anecdotes form a good part of the Holy Qur‘ān. But, speaking generally, people have not given world history any serious role in conducting lives properly. They have, rather than benefiting from it, made it into an intellectual pastime which would either help to sleep or to while away spare time.

Perhaps, it is for this reason that the Holy Qur‘ān has taken the essence of history as a server of warning and a dispenser of good counsel. But, this is unlike the customary historical fiction where the story or the event are an end in themselves. So, the Qur‘ān has not taken up historical events as ongoing events in their own right. Instead of doing something like that, it has chosen to place part of the narrative as relevant to the given subject and setting of the message in the text. Then, there would be another occasion, another place, when it would describe another part of the story as relevant there. This may be indicative of the reality that a report or story is not an end by itself, in-



stead, the purpose is to identify the outcome of the report and the practical implication of the event, therefore, one should be concerned with what is necessary for the objective in sight, move ahead and survey his circumstances in that light - that is, learn that vital lesson from what has gone before and thereby correct oneself.

In the first verse, it was said about the people of Makkah, the direct addressees of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: *أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ*: ‘Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed prior to them?’ Here, ‘seen’ means to ponder about, because these generations were not present before them at that time to see. It was after that, that the destruction of many generations (*‘qarn’*) was mentioned.

The word, *قَرْنٍ*: *qarn*, is used for a group of people collectively present at a given time and period. It is also used to denote a long period of time which could be, depending on different interpretations, between ten to one hundred years. But, some events and narrations do support the position that this word is used for one hundred years as it appears in a *Hadīth* in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had told Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Busr al-Mā‘zīniyy that he will live for one *Qarn*. Also when the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for a certain child that may he live for a whole *qarn*, he did live for a full one hundred years. The majority of ‘*Ulamā*’ take the famous *Hadīth*: *خَيْرُ الْعُرُونَ قَرْنِي ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ* (still recited as part of the *Khuṭbah* of *Jumu‘ah* all over the world) to be meaning exactly this, that is, every *qarn* is one hundred years.

About past peoples of the world, first it was said that the kind of power and well-being given to them was not given to people later than them, but when these very people took to the ways of belying prophets and disobeying Divine injunctions, all that majesty of power and wealth was rendered futile against the punishment of Allah which annihilated them totally. So, this was a lesson for the addressees of today, the people of Makkah who did not have the power of the legendary people of ‘Ād and Thamūd, nor the affluence of the people of Syria and Yaman. For them, the need of the hour was to learn a lesson from what happened to the peoples of the past and turn towards an examination of their doings and think where they are going to end up by opposing the truth.

At the end of the verse, it was said: *وَإِنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ* (and raised up, after them, another generation). It means that the great power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* was not simply limited to seeing that nations of strength, authority and power lay destroyed in a flash, but it was right there on the ashes of their destruction that other peoples were made to rise and populate places, as if nothing had happened there and no one was missing from the scene. This spectacle of Divine power and wisdom is something observable in its own ways during every time and period when thousands die every day but there is no vacuum left anywhere. We never come to realize that people who belonged here are not here anymore.

Once, while on the plains of Arafāt with a million men and women spread around, came the thought that only a mere seventy or eighty years earlier, none among this whole assembly of people existed. Yet, on this same place of 'Arafāt, nearly that many other human beings were present, no trace of whom exists today. On this analogy, imagine about any assembly of human beings, any animated gathering of people, think about their past and future, and then figure out what you get - somebody telling you to wise up to the ultimate truth of things: *فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ* (Praised be Allah, the best of creators).

The second verse (7) was revealed in the background of a particular event when 'Abdullāh ibn Umaiyah came up with a hostile demand before the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* by saying: 'I cannot believe in you until such time that I see you climbing all the way to the heavens and bringing a book from there before our eyes, in which it should be written in my name that I should attest to your prophethood.' And, on top of saying all this, he went on to even declare that he would still not be impressed enough by his accomplishing all that for he does not seem to be likely to convert to Islam anyway.

Strange are the ways of fate, for this very gentleman embraced Islam later on, and embraced it with such fervor and class that he became a winning warrior in the cause of Islam and received his *Shahādah* (martyrdom) in the Battle of Tā'if.

Such were the uncalled-for and hostile demands made and mocking and insulting dialogues inflicted on the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*, specially when he himself was more affectionate for his people, more

than their own parents could ever be to them. What effect these caustic bad manners would have made on his heart is something we cannot fathom. It can only be sensed by one who is consumed with the good of his people in the same manner as the blessed Prophet himself was.

Therefore, to comfort him, it was said that such demands from his antagonists were not being put forward for any useful purpose, nor did they want to follow it. They were a kind of people who would not stop at what they were demanding. Even if they were presented with far more clear proofs of their Prophet's veracity, they would still not believe. For example, if Allah were to send down, as they demanded, a written book from the heavens - and not only that they see it for themselves that there is no sleight of hand or sight or magic, they may even physically touch it with their hands to make sure that they were not day-dreaming and that it was a reality - still, after all that, they would say nothing but: *إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ* (This is nothing but sheer magic). This is because what they are saying comes from malice and hostility.

The third verse (8) was also revealed because of an event which concerns this very ‘Abdullah ibn Abī Umaiyyah who, accompanied by Nadr ibn al-Hārith and Nawfal ibn Khālīd, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This time their demand was: ‘We shall believe in you only when you go and bring a book from the heavens and let four angels come along with it to testify that the book was from none but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah.’

One answer Allah gave to them was that by making such demands, these heedless people were inviting their own destruction, because the Divine law is that, should a people ask their prophet to show a miracle of their choice, and as a result of their demand, such miracle is shown by the power and will of Allah, then, should they, even then, remain reluctant to believe and accept faith any longer, they are destroyed by a mass general punishment. These particular people of Makkah were really not making their demands as based on any good intentions, which may have at the least given some hope of their accepting the truth. Therefore, it was said: *لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ لَكُمْ لَا يُنظَرُونَ* (And had We sent down an angel, the whole matter would have been finished). In other words, it means : ‘If We do send the miracle they demand, that is, send an angel, then, these people who are not the kind who would

accept truth will still act contrary and hostile even after having seen the miracle, then, the Divine command to have them destroyed would stand activated. Since they would be given no respite after that happens, therefore, they should understand that the fact of not showing the miracle demanded by them spells out real good for them, without which they would be nowhere.

The second answer to this problem with them was given in the fourth verse (9) in a different manner where it was said that people asking such questions were certainly strange people who were demanding that angels should come down to them. This is so because there are only two ways angels can come down. Firstly, an angel may come as he is, in his form and state of being. If so, no human being can stand before his real awe - in fact, he is more likely to die at the never-imagined sight. The second form in which the angel could come down is that the angel comes in human shape and form, as Sayyidnā Jibra‘īl al-Amīn has come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ several times in the shape of a human being. In this situation too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is told, this questioner will have the same objection against this ‘angel’ as he has against you - because he would take him to be nothing but human.

After having answered all these hostile questions, solace has been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the fifth verse (10) by saying that this attitude of mockery and injury directed against him by his people is not something particular to him. Other prophets and messengers before him had to face similar heart-breaking experiences, but they did not lose hope. Finally, what happened was that those who used to mock were overtaken by the punishment which they mocked at.

In short, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been assured that his mission is to convey the commandments of Allah. Once he feels he has done that, let his heart be at rest. Whether someone is affected by the message or not, that is not for him to worry about - for it is not a part of his duty as a Messenger of Allah. So, let this concern bring no sorrow to his heart.

## Verses 12 - 14

قُلْ لِمَنْ مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ط قُلْ لِلَّهِ ط كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ  
 الرَّحْمَةَ ط لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ط الَّذِينَ  
 خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَكَهَ مَا سَكَنَ فِي اللَّيْلِ  
 وَالنَّهَارِ ط وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ اتَّخَذُ وَلِيًّا  
 فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ ط قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ  
 أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

Say, "To whom belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth?" Say, "To Allah." He has prescribed for Himself to be merciful. He will surely gather you towards a day of doom in which there is no doubt. Those who have brought loss to themselves are not going to believe. [12]

And to Him belongs what finds rest in the night and the day. And He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [13]

Say, "Would I take as guardian someone other than Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and He feeds, and is not fed?" Say, "I have been asked to be the first to submit." And never be one of those who ascribe partners to Allah. [14]

### Commentary

In the opening verse (12), قُلْ لِمَنْ مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ, the disbelievers have been asked as to who is the Master of the entire universe and all that it contains. Then, Allah Himself gives the answer through the blessed words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah is the Master of all. The reason for answering the question, rather than waiting for the disbelievers to answer it, is that the answer given was an accepted fact with the disbelievers of Makkah as well, for they were, though involved with Shirk and idolatry, no deniers of the fact that Allah Almighty was the Master of the heavens and the earth and everything they contained.

The word, إلى, *ilā* (towards) in the next sentence: لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

(He will surely gather you towards a day of doom) has been used either in the sense of *tawaffā* meaning to take in full, bring to a finish, or gather, (as in the translation of the meaning given here), in which case, it would mean that Allah Ta‘ālā will gather everyone, from the beginning to the end, on the day of *Qiyāmah* - or, it could mean ‘to gather in the graves,’ in which case, it would mean that human beings will be kept being gathered into their resting places unto the day of *Qiyamah* when they will be raised back to life. (Qurtubī)

As for the sentence: كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ (He has prescribed for Himself to be merciful) appearing a little earlier in verse 12, a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta‘ālā made His creation, He made a promise to Himself in writing which is with Him, written in which are the words: إِنَّ رَحْمَتِي تَغْلِبُ عَلَى عَضَابِي that is, ‘My mercy shall remain dominant over My wrath.’ (Qurtubī)

The sentence which appears at the end of the verse : الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ : (Those who have brought loss to themselves ... ) indicates that the deprivation of the disbelievers from the universal mercy of Allah Almighty mentioned earlier was caused by their own deeds, for they did not take to the way which brings mercy - that is, the way of belief and faith. (Qurtubī)

The word, ‘*sukūn*’ appearing in verse 13: وَرَلَهُ مَا سَكَنَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ (And to Him belongs what finds rest in the night and the day) could either mean the state of being still or at rest, in which case, the verse would mean that Allah is the Master of everything present in the night and the day. Or, it is also possible that the sense could be that of a combined state of stillness and movement (which would amount to saying - what tarries and what moves), but what was mentioned here is the state of *sukūn* or rest only - because, movement which stands in contrast to it can be understood as being obvious enough.

### Verses 15- 21

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ مَنْ  
بَصُرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ ۗ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَإِنْ

يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ  
 بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ  
 وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾ قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ۗ قُلِ اللَّهُ  
 شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ  
 وَمَنْ بَلَغَ أَتَيْنَكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً أُخْرَىٰ ۗ قُلْ لَا  
 أَشْهَدُ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌُ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٩﴾  
 الَّذِينَ اتَّيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ الَّذِينَ  
 خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ  
 عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

Say, "If I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a momentous day." [15] Whoever is spared from it (that day) is, indeed, blessed with His mercy. And that is success, open and clear. [16]

And if Allah causes you some harm, no one is there to remove it except He Himself; and if He causes you some good, then He is powerful over everything. [17] And He is Dominant over His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware. [18]

Say, "What can be the greatest in bearing witness?"  
 Say, "Allah. He is the witness between me and you.  
 And this Qur'an has been revealed to me so that I  
 should thereby warn you, and whomsoever it may  
 reach. Do you really bear witness that there are other  
 gods along with Allah?" Say, "I bear no such witness."  
 Say, "In fact, He is one God. And I have nothing to do  
 with what you associate (with Him)." [19]

Those to whom We have given the Book recognize him  
 (the Messenger) as they would recognize their sons.  
 Those who have brought loss to themselves, they are  
 not going to believe. [20] And who is more unjust than  
 the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His  
 signs? Beware, the unjust shall not prosper. [21]

## Commentary

In the previous verses, the command given was to shun Shirk and believe in the perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhu* mentioned therein. In the first of the present verses (15), the punishment for the contravention of this command has been mentioned in a particularly endearing manner, that is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been ‘commanded’ that he should tell the people that should he too (God forbid) come to contravene the command of His Lord, then, he too has the fear of the punishment of the day of *Qiyāmah*. It is obvious that the noble Messenger of Allah is (Divinely) protected from every sin - so, the likelihood of disobedience coming from him simply does not exist. But, by mentioning this hypothetical situation, the purpose is to convey the message to the community that the contravention of the Divine command is so serious a matter that even the greatest prophet cannot stand excused from it - if not him, who else?

After that, it was said: مَنْ يُصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ (Whoever is spared from it that day is, indeed, blessed with His mercy). It means that the punishment of the day of Resurrection (*al-Mahshar*) is extremely horrendous and harsh. Whoever finds this removed from him or her should know that it was great mercy from Allah. This has been further strengthened by saying: وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ (And that is success, open and clear). The word, الْفَوْزُ: ‘*al-fawz*’ (success) means being admitted in *Jannah* (Paradise). This tells us that deliverance from punishment and admittance into the Paradise are inseparable from each other.

## All Gain and Loss Comes from Allah: A Cardinal Muslim Belief

In the third verse (17), a basic article of faith in Islam has been described - that it is Allah, in reality, who is the Master-Dispenser of all gain and loss. No one can ‘really’ bring the least benefit to anyone, nor cause the least harm. As for the outward manifestation of gain or loss, benefit or harm, seen coming from one person to the other, is no more than a matter of appearances. Seen in the full flash of reality, this does not hold out any more than a ready-to-vanish curtain. So succinctly the idea was put in a Persian couplet:



کار زلفِ تست مشک افشانی اَمَّا عاشقان  
مصلحتِ راتہمتے برآ ہوئے چیں بستہ اند

Spraying Musk is the work of your tresses, but those who love you  
Have found it expedient to ascribe the blame to the Chinese deer!

This belief too is one of the revolutionary beliefs of Islam, a belief which made Muslims shed the dependence on the created and rely on their Creator alone. It was this belief which put together a large group of unprecedented charmers of the soul on the map of the world, who were, despite their meager means and haunting hunger, weightier and worthier than a whole world - for they would not bow their heads before anyone.

The Holy Qur‘ān has taken up this subject at many places with different approaches, out of which, quoted here is a verse from Sūrah Faṭīr:

مَا يَفْتَحِ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكُ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

What Allah, out of His mercy, does make open to people, there is no one to withhold it; and what He does withhold, there is no one to release it after that - 35:2.

It appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say this in his prayers very often:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا اَعْطَيْتَ وَلَا مُعْطِيَ لِمَا مَنَعْتَ وَلَا يَنْفَعُ ذَا الْجَدِّ مِنْكَ الْجُدُّ

"O Allah, there is no withholder of what You have bestowed and there is no giver of what You have withheld and no status of a man of status can be of use to him against You.

Under his comments on this verse, Imām al-Baghawī has reported from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās that there was an occasion when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mounted a ride, he asked me to sit behind him. After having covered some distance, he turned towards me and said, ‘You young man.’ I said: ‘Here I am, *Yā Rasūl* Allah. Can I do something?’ He said: ‘You remember Allah. Allah will remember you. If you will remember Allah, you will find Him before you under all circumstances. You recognize Allah when you are in peace and comfort, Allah will recognize you when you are in trouble. When you have to

ask, only ask Allah. When you need help, seek help only from Allah. Whatever is going to happen in this world has already been written by the writer of destiny. If all those created were to combine and try to bring a benefit to you in which Allah has kept no share for you, they would never be able to do that. And if they all come together and try to inflict a harm on you which is not in your lot, they would never become capable of doing that. If you are sure of being able to act patiently, then, do just that, by all means. If you do not have the strength and ability to do so, observe patience - because there is great good and *barakah* in remaining patient against what does not go well with your temperament. And understand it very clearly that the help of Allah is with patience, and comfort with hardship, and prosperity with adversity.’ (This *Hadīth* also appears in Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Ahmad with sound chains of authority)

Alas, despite this clear declaration of the Qur‘ān and the age long teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, this *Ummah* has started going off course in this critical matter when they have handed out what lies in the exclusive domain of Allah to His created beings. Today, there is a very large number of Muslims who would, rather than call upon Allah and pray to Him in their hour of distress, cry for help in all sorts of names, but do not seem to remember the name of Allah. As for praying to Allah through the spiritual mediation of prophets and men of Allah, that is a different matter, and that is permissible. Evidences of which are available within the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. But, calling on or praying to a created being directly for the removal of one’s need or solution of problem is an open rebellion against this Qur‘ānic injunction. May Allah keep all Muslims on the straight path.

At the end of verse 18, it was said: **وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ** (And He is dominant over His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware). It means that the mastery of Allah Ta‘ālā prevails over His servants in the absolute sense and that everyone remains under His power and control all the time. This is the reason why no human being, no matter how great, whether a prophet close to Allah, or the most powerful ruler of the world, none of them come out successful in everything they do, nor is every wish of theirs granted.

And then, He is Wise too, for everything He does is essential Wisdom. And then, He is All-Aware too, for He is the One who knows everything. Thus, by the word, *al-Qāhīr* (the Dominant) pointed to is the perfect power of Allah Ta‘ālā and, by the word, *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise), His all-encompassing knowledge - and the two tell us that perfection in knowledge and power are the sole attributes of Almighty Allah and it is only Him that they belong to.

A particular event which is the cause of the revelation of this verse has been generally reported by commentators. It is said that once a deputation of the people of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They said: ‘You claim to be a Messenger of Allah. Who is your witness on this? We have yet to see a man who attests to its truth, although we have tried our best to confirm it from the Jews and Christians.’

Thereupon, the verse: *قُلْ أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً* which means: You tell them whose witness could be greater than that of Allah, within whose power lies the gain and loss of everyone in the world? Then, you tell them that Allah is the witness between me and you. The witness of Allah refers to those miracles and signs which Allah Ta‘ālā made manifest to confirm the veracity of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, addressing the people of Makkah, it was said: *أَتَنْتَكُمُ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً* *أُنزِلِي* It means: Do you, even after the witness of Allah Ta‘ālā Himself, stand to witness against Him by saying that there are other gods too along with Allah? If that is so, you are responsible for your fate. As for me, I bear no such witness. Then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is asked to tell them: *قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ الْوَاحِدُ* that is, He is one God, the only one worthy of worship who has no partners, sharers or associates in His pristine Divinity.

And also said there was: *رَأَوْحِي إِلَيْ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِأُنذِرْكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ* that is, ‘and the Qur’ān has been sent to me as the revealed Word of Allah so that I should warn you of His punishment and also warn all those people to whom this Qur’ān will keep reaching until the day of *Qiyāmah*.

This proves that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Last Prophet and the Qur’ān, the Last Book. It will continue to be recited and taught right through the day of *Qiyāmah*, and people will remain obliged to follow it.

Sayyidnā Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr رضى الله عنه said: To Whomever the Qur‘ān has reached, he has become like one who has visited Muḥammad ﷺ. And it appears in another *Ḥadīth*: To whomever the Qur‘ān has reached, I am his warner (*‘nadhīr’*).

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had asked his Companions emphatically : *بَلِّغُوا عَنِّي وَكُلُوا آيَةَ* : that is, convey my instructions and teachings to people, even if it be one ‘*Āyah*.

And Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: May Allah keep that person hale and hearty who heard a saying of mine, committed it to his memory and then conveyed it to my *Ummah*. This is important because it generally happens that a person may not himself appreciate the sense of what is said but which would be understood much better by a person of later times to whom the first person has conveyed it.

In verse 20, there is a refutation of the saying of those who had said that they had checked with the Jews and the Christians and none of them were ready to attest to his truth as a Messenger of Allah. About that it was said: *الَّذِينَ آمَنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ آبْنَاءَهُمْ* That is, as for the Jews and Christians, they recognize Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ as they would recognize their sons.

The reason is that there is, in the Torah and Injīl, a full description of the physical features of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, of his home city and then his post-emigration place of residence, and of his habits and morals and achievements - all this in such details that it leaves no room for doubt in the recognition of his identity. In fact, this is not limited to the mention of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Torah and the Injīl carry even the detailed description of his noble *Ṣaḥābah* as well. Therefore, there was no possibility that anyone who recited the Torah and the Injīl and believed in them would be unable to recognize the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

At this point, the simile given in the text is that of children - ‘as they would recognize their sons.’ Not said here is: as children recognize their parents. The reason is that the recognition of children by parents is most detailed and certain. Children remain before parents day and night under all conditions. From infancy to younger years,

they are raised in the hands and laps of parents. So, the extent to which parents can recognize their children, their children cannot recognize them.

Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām رضى الله عنه belonged to the Jewish faith, then he became a Muslim. Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā‘zam رضى الله عنه asked him: Allah Ta‘ālā says in the Qur‘ān that you recognize our Rasūl as you would recognize your sons. What is the reason for it? Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Salām said: Yes, we know the Holy Prophet ﷺ from his qualities and features revealed by Allah Almighty through the Torah. Therefore, this knowledge of ours is certain and absolute. This is contrary to our offspring about whom one could doubt whether or not they were their children.

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Sa‘nah who first belonged to the people of the Book had recognized the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through the description of his qualities and features stated in the Torah and the Injīl. There was only one quality which could not be confirmed from earlier information. So, this he confirmed by testing. That quality was : ‘His forbearance will dominate his anger.’ Then, he went to see the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, made his test and found him a true bearer of this quality. He instantly became a Muslim.

In the last verse (21), it was said that these people of the Book who, despite knowing the true identity of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, do not accept Islam were simply ruining themselves at their own hands: الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (Those, who have brought loss on themselves, they are not going to believe).

#### Verses 22 -26

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا آيِنَ شِرْكَائِكُمْ  
 الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فَتَسْتَثْنِهِمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا  
 وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَيَّ  
 أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن  
 يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي

أَذَانِهِمْ وَقَرَأُوا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا  
جَاءَهُمْ مِجَادِلُوكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ  
الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْتَوْنَ عَنْهُ ۗ وَإِنْ يُهْلِكُونَ إِلَّا  
أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And (forget not) the Day We shall gather them together, then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, “Where are those you claimed to be partners of Allah?” [22] Then, their fallacy will lead them to nothing but that they will say, “By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah.” [23] See how they lied about themselves - and lost to them was all that they used to coin. [24]

And there are those among them who listen to you, but We have put coverings on their hearts, so that they do not understand, and heaviness in their ears. And if they were to see all the signs, they will still not believe in them. So much so that, when they come to quarrel with you, the disbelievers say, “It is nothing but tales of the ancients.” [25]

And from it they prevent and from it they keep away, and they ruin none but themselves, and they do not realize. [26]

### Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse (21) was that the unjust and the deniers of truth will not receive salvation. Details appear in the present verses. The first (22) and the second (23) verses talk about the great trial to be held on the day of Resurrection before the Lord of all. It was said: *وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا* (And [forget not] the Day We shall gather them together), that is, ‘gather all disbelievers and their self-made objects of worship together.’ After that, it is said: *ثُمَّ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا آيِنَ شُرَكَائِكُمْ* (then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, “Where are those you claimed to be partners of Allah?”), that is, ‘ask them about the objects of worship they had taken to as partners of Allah, and resolvers of their problems, and why would they not come to help them in their hour of trial.’

The word, **ثُمَّ**: ‘*thumma*’ (then, after that), used here denotes delay, which tells us that the trial of answering fateful questions will not start soon after having been gathered on the Day of Resurrection. Instead, they shall keep standing in that state of wonder and perplexity for a long period of time. It will be a passage of time in between when the reckoning will commence.

In a *Hadīth*, the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** has been reported to have said: What would happen to you when Allah Ta‘ālā will gather you on the plains of Resurrection as arrows are gathered in the quiver - and you shall be in that state for fifty thousand years. And it appears in another narration that everyone will tarry in the dark on that Day for one thousand years - not being able to even talk to each other.

(This narration has been reported by Hākim in Al-Mustadrak, and by Al-Baihaqī)

The difference of fifty thousand and ten thousand in this narration also appears in two verses of the Holy Qur‘ān as well. In Sūrah Al-Ma‘ārij, it is said: **كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ** ‘[a Day] the measure whereof is [as] fifty thousand years - 70:4.’ In Sūrah Al-Ḥajj, it is said: **إِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ** ‘A Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning - 22:47.’ The reason for this difference is that this day will be long in of the severity of pain and the levels of pain will be different. Therefore, this day will seem to be that of fifty thousand years for some and that of one thousand years for others.

In short, on this venue of the great trial, a long period of time will pass for the trial to begin, so much so, that these people will wish that reckoning comes so that they can be relieved from their state of uncertainty, no matter what happens in the end. It is to indicate this length of stay that, as indicated earlier, the word, **ثُمَّ** (then) was prefixed to **ثُمَّ نَقُولُ** (then We shall say). Similarly, the answer given by the disbelievers mentioned in the second verse (23) also appears with the word, **ثم** (then), which indicates that they too will come up with their answer after having deliberated over it for a long period of time, in which they will say: **وَاللَّهُ رَبُّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ** (By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah). In this verse, their answer has been identified as: **فِتْنَةٍ**: ‘*fitnah*’ which could mean ‘trial’ or ‘infatuation.’ Both meanings can be taken here. In the first case, the answer given by the disbelievers becomes a trial by itself; while, in the second case, it would mean that these peo-

ple were infatuated with idols and other self-made objects of worship, even made sacrifices for them, but all that infatuation was gone on this day when they had no choice but to declare their total disassociation from them.

There is something very astonishing in their answer. That was a nerve-shattering time with the day being the Day of Retribution with the awesome manifestations of the power and authority of their Lord all there, yet they had the courage to lie before their very Lord, and that too, with such shamelessness that they are swearing by His great name and saying that they were no disbelievers!

Most commentators explain this answer given by the disbelievers as something not based on foresight or hindsight. In fact, it was caused by the heat of surrounding awe and the loss of personal nerves, a condition in which one utters what is not intended. But, by giving some thought to the general happenings and conditions of the Day of Resurrection, it could be said that Allah Ta‘ālā had given them the freedom to say things as they used to say in their life of the mortal world so that everyone present on the Day of Resurrection could see their full profile and get to know that these people did not stop at disbelief and polytheism, but that they were also unmatched as liars, for they would not desist from lying at least on an occasion so horrifying. Another verse of the Qur‘ān (Sūrah Al-Mujādalah): *فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُ كَمَا يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ* (then they will swear to Him as they swear to you - 58:18) gives a hint in this direction which means that very much in the manner they swear falsely before Muslims, they would not hesitate in swearing as falsely before the Lord of all the worlds Himself.

When these people have become sworn deniers of their *Shirk* and *Kufr* (attribution of partners to Allah and disbelief) on the day of Resurrection, that will be the time when Allah, in His absolute power, will have their mouths sealed with silence. His command will then go to the limbs of their bodies - ‘now, you speak as witnesses to everything they did’ - then, will come the proof that their own hands and feet and eyes and ears were all some kind of secret service agents who had been with them all along. They will tell, and tell everything they did. About that, it has been said in Sūrah Ya-Sīn: *الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَنَشْهَدُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ* (That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But



their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did - 36:65). After having witnessed this demonstration of unimaginable power, no one will, then, dare conceal anything or lie about it.

At another place in the Holy Qur‘ān, it is said: وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ حَدِيثًا (And they shall not conceal anything from Allah - 4:42). Explaining its meaning, this is what Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās had said: That is, they would first lie as much as they could, even swear falsely, but once their own hands and feet shall testify against them, they will not have the courage to say anything wrong after that.

So, we see that a wrong-doer shall be given full freedom to put his statement on record in the court of the Judge of judges. If he chooses to lie, as he did in his mortal life, his right to do that will not be snatched away from him - because Allah will Himself, in His absolute power, demolish the facade of his lie through the testimony of his own body parts.

This is why telling lies after death will not work. Think of an entrance examination or an admission test. After death, man’s first test will be given by angels, *Munkar* and *Nakīr*. Says the *Hadīth*: When *Munkar* and *Nakīr* will ask a *Kāfir* (disbeliever): مَنْ رَبُّكَ وَمَا دِينُكَ (Who is your Lord and what is your religion?), the *Kāfir* will say: مَا هَا، لَا أَدْرِي (Oh O, I do not know). In contrast a true Muslim will answer by saying: رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ وَدِينِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ (Allah is my Lord and Islam is my religion). It appears no one will have the courage to lie in this test, otherwise a *Kāfir* could have given the same answer as was given by a Muslim. The reason is that the test will be taken by angels who do not have the knowledge of the unseen, nor are they capable of making hands and feet give witness. If man had the choice of lying there, the angels would have simply acted in accordance with the answer given, but this would have disturbed the system. This is contrary to the test of the day of Resurrection where questions will be asked and answers given before Almighty Allah which means that no lie will work there even if resorted to.

Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and Mazḥarī report from some elders that the people denying their Shirk on oaths will be those who did not openly declare a created being to be God or His deputy, but as for their deed, they had assigned all powers of Godhood to His created beings,

and from them sought answers to their needs, in their name they would make offerings, and from them they would ask sustenance, health, children and everything they wished to have. These people did not consider themselves as *Mushriks*. Therefore, on the day of Resurrection they would swear to it that they were not *Mushriks*. Ultimately, Allah Almighty will expose their disgrace.

Another question which arises in this verse is about what has been said in some verses of the Qur‘ān - that Allah Almighty will not speak to the disbelievers and sinners - while, the present verse seems to be indicating clearly that such address will come to pass.

The answer is that such address or speech will not be in the form of honouring them or accepting their prayers. As for the negation of an address based on admonition, that is not intended in this verse. It could also be said that the address mentioned in this verse may be through the angels. As for the verse where Divine speech or address has been negated, it refers to an indirect address.

In verse 24, it was said: *انظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ* (See how they lied about themselves - and lost to them was all that they used to coin). The address here is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who has been asked to see how these people have lied against their own selves, and whatever they used to forge and fabricate against Allah (their idols and so-called partners to Allah) is lost to them. The expression translated as ‘lied about themselves’ means that the curse of this lie is going to fall on their own selves while the word, *افتراء* translated as ‘used to coin’ may also mean that ascribing partners to Allah was a fabrication in the mortal world the reality of which was exposed on the day of Resurrection. And it is also possible that *‘iftirā’* or fabrication could be referring to the false oath taken on the day of Resurrection following which the witness of the limbs of the body exposed their lie.

Some commentators say that *‘iftirā’* or fabrication refers to interpretations they used to put on their false objects of worship in the mortal world, for example: *مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وُقُوفًا* which means that ‘We do not worship them taking them to be God but only do it so that they would intercede on our behalf with Allah and bring us closer to Him - 39:3.’ This fabrication of theirs got exposed on the day of Resurrection

when no one interceded on their behalf in their hour of trial, nor any one did anything to bring about a reduction in their punishment.

This brings us to a question, for the verse seems to indicate that at the time of trial featuring these questions and answers, all false objects of worship will not be present there, but a verse of the Qur‘ān says: *أَحْضِرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمْتُمْ وَأَرْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ* (gather up those who have been unjust, and their partners, and what they used to worship - 37:22). This seems to indicate that the false objects of worship will also be present on the day of Resurrection.

The answer is that the sense of their being absent from the plains of Resurrection, as it emerges from this verse, is limited to their being unavailable as partners, sharers or intercessors. Thus, though they would be unable to help their clients in any way but, they would be present there. So, there remains no contradiction between the two verses. Then, it is also possible that all of them could be gathered together at one time and place, then be separated and the question is asked after the separation.

In these two verses, it should be particularly borne in mind that the choice of free speech given to disbelievers on the day of Resurrection which they utilized by denying on false oath that they had anything to do with Shirk, is not without its implications. Perhaps, it carries a hint that the habit of telling lies is an evil habit which is never easy to shake off. So much so that these people, who used to swear falsely before Muslims during their life in the mortal world, were unable to stop lying even on the fateful day of Resurrection which put them to disgrace before the entire creation of Allah. Therefore, lying has been strongly condemned in the Qur‘ān and Ḥadīth which give serious warning to those who tell lies. At many places in the Qur‘ān liars have been cursed. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Stay away from lying because a lie is the accomplice of sins, and a lie and a sin will both go to *Jahannam*. (Ibn Ḥibban in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked what deed could take one to Hell. He said: A lie [the Musnad of Aḥmad]. And on the night of the *Mi‘rāj* (the Ascent to Heaven), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saw a man having the corners of his mouth being slit apart which then fall back into their place and become as they were, and again they are slit.

apart ... something to keep happening to him throughout the day of *Qiyāmah*. He asked the angel, Jibra‘īl al-Amin: “Who is he?” Angel Jibra‘īl said: “He is a liar.”

And it appears in a narration from the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: One cannot become a complete Muslim unless he gives up lying altogether, to the extent that he would not lie even by way of joke or fun.

In addition to that, it appears in Al-Baihaqī and others, all on sound authority, that the character of a Muslim may have other bad traits - but, not breach of trust and lying. Yet another *Hadīth* says that lying decreases one’s *Rizq* (sustenance).

The verse: *وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ* (And from it they prevent - 26), according to early commentators Daḥḥāk, Qatādah and Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyah, was revealed about the common disbelievers of Makkah who prevented people from listening to the Qur‘ān and following it - and saw to it that they themselves stayed away from it. It has also been reported from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās that this verse concerns the Holy Prophet’s ﷺ respected uncle, Abū Ṭālib, as well as other uncles who stopped people from causing pain to him, even supported him, but would not believe in the Qur‘ān nor follow it. If so, the pronoun in *يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ* will revert to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and not to the Qur‘ān. (Mazharī with narration by Ibn Abī al-Ḥātim from Sa‘īd ibn Abī Hilāl)

### Verses 27 - 32

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ وَقَفُوا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوا يَلَيْتَنَا مُرَدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبُ  
بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ بَلْ بَدَأ لَهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا  
يُخْفُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَآنَهُوا عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ  
﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَالُوا إِن هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ  
﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ وَقَفُوا عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ ط قَالَ أَلَيْسَ هَذَا بِالْحَقِّ ط  
قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّنَا ط قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ  
﴿٣٠﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ ط حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ

السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوا يَحْسِرُنَا عَلَى مَا فَرَطْنَا فِيهَا ۗ وَهُمْ  
يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَى ظُهُورِهِمْ ۗ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزُرُونَ ﴿٣١﴾  
وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ ۗ وَ لَهُمْ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ  
يَتَّقُونَ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And if you were to see when they would be made to stand at the Fire and they will say, “Would that we were sent back, then we would not belie the signs of our Lord, and would join the believers.” [27] In fact, what they were concealing before would become clear to them. And if they were sent back, they would again go for what they were forbidden from, as they are nothing but liars. [28]

And they say, “What does exist is nothing but this worldly life of ours, and we are not going to be raised again.” [29]

And if you were to see when they will be made to stay before their Lord! He will say, “Is this not true?” They will say, “Of course, by our Lord, it is.” He will say, “Then, taste the punishment, for you used to disbelieve.” [30]

Losers indeed are those who deny that they will ever face Allah, yet when the Hour will come upon them suddenly, they will say, “Alas! we have been negligent about it.” And they shall be carrying their burdens on their backs. Beware, evil is the burden they carry! [31]

And the worldly life is nothing but a game and play. And the last abode is surely good for those who fear Allah. Would you still not understand? [32]

### Commentary

There are three basic principles of Islam: *Tauhid* (Oneness of Allah), *Risalah* (Prophethood) and *'Ākhirah* (Belief in the Hereafter). All other articles of faith fall under these three. These are principles which tell human beings who they are and what is the purpose of their life. This understanding brings a revolution in their lives by showing them the straight path. Out of these, the Belief in the *'Ākhirah*, the be-

lief that there is a reckoning of deeds to come when good shall be rewarded and evil punished, has pragmatically the most revolutionary effects, as it channels every human deed into a particular direction. This is the reason why all subjects dealt with in the Qur'ān revolve around these three. In the verses appearing here, special emphasis has been laid on the reckoning of the 'Ākhirah, its rewards and punishments, and the true nature of the mortal world.

In the first verse, portrayed is the condition of wrong-doers and deniers of truth who, when made to stand by the edges of the Hell, and to observe the horrifying punishment far beyond their imagination, would wish that they were sent back into the world where now they would never falsify the signs and commands of their Lord, would believe in them and would be the true believers.

In the second verse (28), Almighty Allah, who is All-Knowing and All-Aware, exposes the reality of their wish, which would be nothing but the compulsion of circumstances, by making it clear that these people have always been addicted to lying and that they were liars even in their present wish under trial. The root of the problem with them was that they did not relish the realities brought before them by the prophets of Allah. They knew that the prophets were true, yet they raised dust to keep such realities unmanifested either because of their chronic obstinacy or worldly greed. But, in the Hereafter, everything came out in the open. They saw the power of Allah with their own eyes. They realized that the prophets had told the truth. Even, the life after death, something they had denied all along was before them, really and physically. Then, they became direct witnesses to reward and punishment and Hell. After that, they were left with no argument to continue their attitude of denial and opposition. So, when they wished to be returned to the mortal world, that was mere absence of choice.

Then, their All-Knowing, All-Aware Master said that this was what they were saying for now, but if they were to be sent back into the mortal world once again, they would simply forget all about their promises and resolutions and will revert to doing what they have been doing before, and would start getting involved once again with the unlawful from which they were stopped. Therefore, what they were say-

ing now was also a lie and a ploy for deception.

That their present statement has been called a lie could also be based on their ultimate deed, that is, their promising not to lie if returned to the world was not true, for this would never happen because they would still do nothing but keep lying when they go there. This lie could also mean that whatever they were saying at that time was not prompted by true intention. They were doing so simply to buy time and avoid punishment while in the heart of their hearts, they still have no intention of doing it.

As for the statement in the third verse (29): وَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا هِيَ إِلا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا (And they say, "There is nothing real but this worldly life of ours"), it reverts back to the word, عَادُوا ('ādū : would again go for) in verse 28. Thus, it means that should they be returned to the world, then, once they reach there, they will still say that they do not accept any life other than the life of this world. Life here is the life and they were not going to be raised again.

A question arises here: When they have seen their return to life on the day of *Qiyāmah* - and reckoning and accounting and reward and punishment - how can it be possible that they would deny it once they have been sent back into the world?

The answer is that denial does not make it necessary that, in reality, they remain uncertain about these events and facts. Instead, it would be very much like our contemporary disbelievers and wrongdoers who, despite their knowledge of Islamic realities, keep sticking to their denial and falsification simply because of their hostility, that these people, once they are returned to the world, and despite having personal certainty of the realities of the day of *Qiyāmah*, of rising to life back again, and of what would happen in the Hereafter, they would still resort to their old habit of belying and falsification simply because of their wickedness or hostility. This is what the Qur‘ān has said about some disbelievers within this present life:

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا

They are striving hard to deny Our signs - while in themselves being certain of their truth - (only) unjustly, and out of pride - 27:14.

This is also similar to what was said about the Jews that they recognized the Last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as they would recognize their sons, yet they remained all bent on opposing him.

To sum up, it can be said that the Creator knows, in His eternal knowledge, that the claim of these people that once they have been sent back to the world, they would become ideal Muslims, is a lie and a deception. If they were, as they wished, to be released into the world put together after its destruction, then, once again, they would do exactly the same things they used to do in their earlier lives.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: At the time of reckoning, Allah Ta‘ālā will ask Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to stand near the Scale of Justice and will ask him that he should look at the deeds of his progeny and allow anyone whose good deeds outweigh his sins to go to Paradise. And then He would say: The one I shall admit to the punishment of Hell will be the one about whom I know that he, if sent to the world again, would do the same thing he had been doing earlier.

About the sentence: *وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ* (And they shall be carrying their burdens) in verse 31, it appears in *Hadīth* narrations that, on the day of *Qiyamah*, the deeds of good people will become their ride while the evil deeds of evil people will be placed like a burden on their heads.

Noteworthy here is that disbelievers and sinners will do everything possible to save their skins on the fateful day of Resurrection. They will be nervous and confused. Sometimes they would hide behind false swearing. At others, they would wish to be returned to the world of their earlier experience. But, none of them will say: Now, we have believed and now we shall be doing nothing but what is good - because they would have seen reality and seen it very clearly - that the phase of *Ākhirah*, the Hereafter, is not the Venue of Deeds (*Dār al-‘Amal*), and that the soundness of *‘Imān* (faith) depends on its being *‘bil-ghayb*, that is, without having the need to see what is Unseen. Confirming what has been seen is simply acting in line with what has been personally seen. It is not what the attestation to the truth of Allah and His Messenger is. So, let us be very clear that working for the pleasure of Allah Ta‘ālā, earning its fruits in the form of the promised state of everlasting bliss, hoping to be blessed with Paradise in the Here-



after, and having a good life of peace and tranquility right here are things which can be achieved only (repeat, only) through the life of the present world, neither before, nor after - for it is not possible to achieve these in the universe of spirits (*arwāh*) before it, nor is it possible to achieve it in the domain of the Hereafter, after the world of our experience is no more there.

### **The Present Life is a Great Blessing: Invest Wisely, and Prosper**

Now we can see that the life of this world is a great blessing, and certainly an asset of unmatched value. (To borrow the terminology of modern investors, 'with such chips in one's hands, who would not go for such a deal of deals?' - Tr.). So, this life is an opportunity which must be taken seriously. That is why suicide is forbidden as *Harām* in Islam, and equally prohibited is praying for death, even the making of a wish to die. This is so because it shows ingratitude for a great blessing of Allah Ta‘ālā.

Also clarified here is the basis on which worldly life has been characterized as game and fun in the last verse (32) here, as well as in several other verses of the Qur‘ān, or in many *Aḥādīth* which condemn worldly life. There, by worldly life what is censured is the time of life which is spent being heedless to the thought and concern of Allah Ta‘ālā. Otherwise, no wealth of the world is equal in worth to the time one spends in remembering Allah and doing what He has commanded us to do. This is also confirmed by a *Ḥadīth* which says:

الدُّنْيَا مَلْعُونٌ وَمَلْعُونٌ مَا فِيهَا إِلَّا ذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَوْ عَالِمٌ أَوْ مَتَعَلِّمٌ

*Dunyā* is cursed and cursed is what is in it, except the Dhikr of Allah, or ‘*Ālim* (a knowledgeable person) or a student.

If seen closely, a teacher (of religion) and a student (of religion) are included under the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah because ‘*Ilm*’ means the knowledge which becomes the cause of the pleasure of Allah. So, the learning and teaching of such an ‘*Ilm*’ are both included under *Dhirkrullāh*. In fact, according to the clarification of Imām al-Jazrī, everything done in this world which is done in conformity with obedience to Allah, that is, in accordance with the injunctions of the Sha-rī‘ah, is all included under the *Dhikr* of Allah. This tells us that every-

thing necessary that must be done in this life of the world, all permissible ways of earning one's livelihood, and the fulfillment of other needs which are not beyond the limits set by the Shari'ah, shall all be considered as being included under the *Dhikr* of Allah. In fact, the fulfillment of the rights of family, relatives and friends, neighbours and guests and others has been identified as an act of *Ṣadaqah* (charity) and *‘Ibādah* (worship of Allah).

To recapitulate, it can be said that, there is nothing in this world more worthy of Allah's favour than *‘Itā‘ah* (obedience to Him) and *Dhikr* (remembrance of Him). Then, the dearest and the worthiest possession man has is his time of life in this world. And we know that this time is limited. And no one knows exactly how long his or her life is, seventy years or seventy hours, or no more than the span of a breath. On the other hand, we know that the pleasure of Allah which is the only guarantee of a good life, here and there, can be acquired only within the limits of our life in this world. Now, every human being, whom Allah has blessed with sense and vision, can decide it for himself how he is going to spend these limited moments and hours of his life, and in what. No doubt, common sense would demand that this precious time should mostly be spent in what would meet the pleasure of Allah. As for chores which are necessary to hold this life together, they should be taken to as needed.

In a *Hadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

الْكَيْسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهُ وَرَضِيَ بِالْكَفَافِ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ

Wise is he who controls his self, and stays pleased with minimal resources, and devotes his deeds for what is after death.

### Verses 33 - 41

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِي يَقُولُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ وَلَكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَى مَا كَذَّبُوا وَآوَدُوا حَتَّى آتَاهُمْ نَصْرُنَا وَلَا مَبَدَّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَقَدْ جَاءَكَ مِنْ نَبَاِ الْمُؤْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَإِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ تَبْتَغِيَ نَفَقًا

فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ سَلَّمًا فِي السَّمَاءِ فَتَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْيَةٌ وَكُتِبَ اللَّهُ  
 لَجْمَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدَى فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾ إِنَّمَا  
 يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ وَالْمَوْتَى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ  
 يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ آيَةً وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَمَا  
 مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ  
 أَمْثَلَكُمْ مَا فَرَقْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ  
 يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا صُمُّ وَبُكْمٌ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ  
 مَنْ يَشَأِ اللَّهُ يُضِلَّهُ وَمَنْ يَشَأِ يُجْعَلْهُ عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ  
 ﴿٣٩﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتَتْكُمْ السَّاعَةُ  
 أَغَيْرِ اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ بَلْ آيَاتُهُ تَدْعُونَ  
 فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِنْ شَاءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

We do know the fact that what they say does grieve you, because it is not you that they are belying, but the transgressors are actually denying the signs of Allah.

[33]

And, indeed, messengers have been belied before you, but they stood patient against their being belied, and they were tortured until Our help came to them. And no one can change the words of Allah, and of course, there have come to you some accounts of the messengers. [34]

And if their aversion is too hard on you, then seek, if you can, a tunnel into the earth or a ladder onto the sky in order to bring them a sign. And had Allah willed, He would have brought them all to the right path. So, never be one of the ignorant. [35]

Only those respond who listen. As for the dead, Allah shall raise them after which they shall be returned to-

wards Him. [36]

And they say, “Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?” Say, “Allah is surely powerful enough to send down a sign, but most of them do not know.” [37]

There is no creature moving on the earth, nor a bird flying on its two wings, but they all are communities like you. We have not missed anything in the Book. Then, to their Lord they shall be gathered together.[38]

And those who have belied Our signs are deaf and dumb, in layers of darkness. Whom Allah wills, He lets him go astray, and whom Allah wills, He brings him on the straight path. [39]

Say, “Tell me if the punishment of Allah comes to you or the Hour befalls you, would you call someone other than Allah, if you are truthful?” [40] Rather, Him alone you will call and He, if He wills, shall remove what you call Him for and you will forget those you associate with Him. [41]

### Commentary

About the statement: **فَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ لَئِيكْفُرُوا بِكَ** (it is not you they are belying, rather, it is the signs of Allah they are denying) in the first verse (33), there is a related event, reported in Tafsīr Mazharī on the authority of a narration by As-Suddiy, according to which, once Akhnas ibn Shuraiq and Abū Jahl, two chiefs of the Quraysh tribe met together. Akhnas asked Abū Jahl: O Abul-Ḥikam, (In Arabia, Abū Jahl was called Abul-Ḥikam - 'man of wisdom' - but because of his hostility to Islam, he became known as Abū-Jahl - 'man of ignorance'), you and me are alone here. There is no third person listening to us. Tell me about Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh **صلى الله عليه وسلم**. Tell me what you really think about him. Is he telling the truth or is he not?

Swearing by Allah, Abū Jahl said: No doubt, Muḥammad **ﷺ** is true. He has never lied all his life. But, the problem is that the thought, that only a single branch of the tribe of Quraysh, the Banū Quṣayy, is going to become the repository of all sorts of virtues and perfections while the rest of the tribe remains totally deprived, is something that we cannot take. It is too much. They have the flag in

their hands. They have the important duty of providing water for the Hajj pilgrims in their hands. They are the custodians of the Ka'bah; its keys are in their hands. Now, if we are to accept that the station of prophethood also belongs to them, what the rest of the Quraysh will be left with?

According to another narration reported from Nā'ijyah ibn Ka'b, once Abū Jahl himself told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: We do not suspect you of lying nor do we belie you, but we do belie the Book or Religion which you have come up with. (Mazhari)

Based on these narrations of *Hadīth*, the verse can be taken in its real sense, that is, 'these disbelievers do not belie you, rather, they belie the signs of Allah.' And this verse could also be taken in the sense that these disbelievers, though belie you obviously but, in reality, the outcome of belying you is itself the belying of Allah and His signs - as it appears in *Hadīth*, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whoever causes pain to me is liable to be judged as causing pain to Allah.

The sixth verse (38): وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ (there is no creature moving ...) tells us that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, animals will also be given life along with human beings. Following a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, it has been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥatīm and Baihaqī that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, all animals, beasts and birds will also be given life once again. Such will be the measure of Divine justice that a horned animal which had hit the hornless one shall be subjected to retaliation, as would be the case with others too. And when all injustices have been vindicated, all of them would be commanded to become dust - and then, dust they shall become. This would be the time when the disbeliever will say: يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ تُرَابًا [78:40] that is, 'would that I too were to become dust, and thus saved from the punishment of Hell!'

In another narration, again from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, Imām Al-Baghawī reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, rights of all holders of rights shall be vindicated, to the limit that a hornless goat shall be vindicated against the horned one.

### Maximum Regard for the Rights of Allah's Creation

Everyone knows that animals have not been obligated to observe

the percepts of any Shari‘ah or code of laws. Only human beings and Jinns have been so obligated. And it is obvious that the jurisdiction of reward and punishment does not apply to the non-obligated. Therefore, ‘Ulamā have said that the retaliation against the behaviour of animals on the day of Resurrection will not be because of their being obligated, but it will be because of the Lord’s utmost regard for equity and justice - based on which the cruelty of one living creature against the other living creature will be recompensed, with no reward or punishment to follow for the rest of their behaviour. This tells us that the matter of mutual rights, and their infringements, pertaining to the creation of Allah is so serious that even non-obligated animals have not been left as exempted from it. But, it is regrettable that there are even many religiously-observing people who would act negligently about it.

#### Verses 42 - 45

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَآخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ  
 وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ  
 بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ  
 مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ  
 أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَاذًا  
 هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَقَطَّعَ دَابِرَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَالْحَمْدُ  
 لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And We did send messengers to communities before you and put them to hardships and sufferings, so that they may supplicate in humility. [42] Why then, did they not supplicate in humility when Our punishment came upon them? Instead, their hearts were hardened and the Satan adorned for them what they were doing. [43]

Thereafter, when they forgot the advice they were given, We opened for them doors of everything until when they became proud of what they were given, We seized them suddenly and they were left in despair. [44] Thus,

**the people who did wrong were uprooted to the last man, and praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [45]**

### Commentary

The verses cited above, if seen in the context of verses appearing immediately previous to them, will show the particular mode in which *Shirk* and *Kufr* have been refuted and *Tauḥīd*, affirmed. First, the disbelievers of Makkah have been asked: If you are hit by a calamity now, for example, the punishment of Allah descends on you right here in this world or comes death or the very Day of Doom breaks loose, then think and answer who it will be you would call for help to keep this calamity away from you or who it would be you will hope to deliver you from this terrible punishment? Do you think these self-sculpted idols in stone or any others from among the creation of Allah you have given His status would come out to help you in your hour of trial? And then, would you still address your cry of distress to them, or would you rather appeal to none but Allah, the One, the All-Powerful?

There can be no better answer from any sensible human being which was given by Allah Ta'ālā Himself on behalf of them - that, at a time of such mass calamity, even the greatest *Mushrik* will forget all about his idols and self-appointed objects of worship and would call none but Allah. If so, the outcome is obvious. These idols of yours, and the objects of worship whom you have given the status of Allah Ta'ālā and whom alone you regard as your problem solvers and granters of wishes, in fact, did not come to help you in your distress, nor could you muster the courage to call them up to help you out. Now then, when would it be that your devotion to them as objects of worship and their role of problems solvers assigned to them by you will start working for you?

What has been said here is a gist of immediately previous verses. Stated here as a matter of supposition is that punishment could befall them within the life of this world as an outcome of their disbelief and disobedience. And, again as a matter of supposition, if the punishment does not visit them in the present life, then, the coming of the *Qiyāmah* is certain after all when account will be taken from all human beings of their deeds and put in effect shall be the law of reward and punishment against these.

‘*Qiyāmah*’ here could mean the commonly acknowledged *Qiyāmah* or the Day of Doom. It is also possible that, by the particular use of the word, ‘As-Sā‘ah’ (The Hour) -[41], the sense could be that of ‘The Smaller Doom’ (*al-Qiyāmatuṣ-Ṣuḡhrā*) which stands activated for every human being immediately after his or her death - as the saying is: **مَنْ مَاتَ فَمُنَّ** **فَقَدْ نَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهُ** (For one who dies, his or her ‘*Qiyāmah*’ (Doom) stands established right then) because a preliminary sampling of the ultimate reckoning of the *Qiyāmah* will come before the deceased in his or her ‘*Qabr*’ (burial place) and in the state of *Barzakh* (the post-death ~ pre-*Qiyāmah* state) and the sampling of the ultimate reward and punishment due ‘there’ would start showing up right from ‘here.’ (Not too difficult to visualize for those familiar with ‘testers’ and ‘samples’ provided on perfume counters in alcoves of major mega stores which are meant to tell the visitor: ‘WYSIWYG!’ That is, ‘what you see is what you get.’ - Tr.)

But, despite warnings given in these verses to disobedient people against their attitude of complacency - lest there comes upon them some sudden Divine punishment as has come on past communities, or death, or ultimately the very reckoning after *Qiyāmah* about which there is no doubt - such people have a mind of their own. They tend to take the whole world on the analogy of their limited experience in the already limited time of their life which makes them compulsive excuse seekers in such matters. Present before them the warnings and intimations given by blessed prophets and they will bypass them as ambiguous thinking, specially at times, and which reappear in all ages, when there are people around who, in spite of their open disobedience to Allah and His Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم**, keep prospering in wealth, property, influence, recognition and power, almost everything. So, on the one hand, here is what they witness with their own eyes, while, on the other hand, is the word of the blessed messenger of Allah who tells them that punishments do come upon the disobedient as it is the customary practice of the One they disobey. Now, as they look at the two sides of the argument simultaneously, then, their own excuse seeking disposition and, of course, the Satan hoodwinks them into believing that the word of the prophet is a deception or delusion.

Now, for an answer, we can turn to the present verses where Almighty Allah has pointed out to the law which applies to what hap-



pened to past communities. It was said: **وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَآخَذْنَاَهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ** It means that Allah did send, before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, His prophets to other communities which were tested in two ways. Firstly, they were tested with hardships and sufferings to see if these would become the cause of their turning to Allah. But, when they failed in this test and, rather than turn to Allah and abandon disobedience, became all the more engrossed in it, then, they were subjected to a different kind of test. The doors of worldly comforts were opened to them. They had everything they could wish for in the material world so that through these blessings they could recognize their Benefactor and remember Him. But they, rather than be grateful to Him, were so lost in the labyrinth of luxury that they forgot all about the messages and teachings of Allah and His Messenger. Thus, having traded their souls for the glitter of fleeting comforts, they failed in both tests, and their case before Allah became conclusively established against them. So, they were seized by the punishment of Allah suddenly which destroyed them to the last man. This punishment had come upon earlier communities too, down from the heavens and up from beneath the earth, and such mass punishments have come in other ways too which had reduced whole peoples and nations to ashes. The people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام were deluged in the great flood which did not spare even mountain peaks. The people of ‘Ād were hit by an eight-day long wind storm which left not one survivor. The people of Thamūd were destroyed through a terrifying sound. The entire habitation of the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام was overturned, the remnants of which still exist in the west of Jordan in the form of a low lying water level which is not conducive to the survival of any sea life. Therefore, it is called The Dead Sea, and also the Sea of Lūṭ.

In short, these were some forms in which Divine punishment befell past communities as a result of their disobedience destroying whole nations and peoples in one stroke. However, it has also happened that such people died away naturally leaving no one behind to remember them.

Also clarified in these verses is that Almighty Allah does not send down His punishment upon any people all of a sudden. Instead, punishments come at the level of admonitions the purpose of which is to make it possible for people to shed their heedlessness and take to the

correct path. We also know from here that the hardship or distress which is sent to people on the earth as punishment for them, though outwardly looks like punishment but, in reality, it is not. Instead of that, it serves the purpose of a wake-up call designed to shake people out of their heedlessness. As such, it is nothing but mercy. Says another verse of the Qur'an: *وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ*, that is, We will make them taste a lesser punishment, leaving the greatest punishment aside, so that they may return - 32:21.

Removed from these very verses is the doubt about this world which is no place for rewards (*Dārul-Jazā'*), but a place where one must do what one should (*Dārul-'Amal*). What then is the sense of being punished in this world where good and bad seem to be weighed on the same scale and where, in fact, the evil ones fare better than the good? The answer is clear. The real reward and punishment will come on that one day of *Qiyāmah*, which is known as the very Day of Judgement (*Yowmud-Dīn*) or the Day of Retribution (*Yowm al-Jazā'*).. But, some hardships are sent in this world as a sample of punishment (*'Adhāb*) and some comforts as a sample of reward (*Thawāb*) which are a token of mercy from Allah. Some spiritual masters have even said that all comforts of the world are indicators of the comforts of Paradise so that one learns to long for them. As for all those hardships and sorrows that afflict man in this world, they too are indicators of the punishment of the Hereafter so that man prepares to stay safe against them. Unless there is a sample or model in sight, no one can be persuaded towards anything, nor can anyone be detracted from any impending danger or evil.

So, the comforts and discomforts of this mortal life are not rewards and punishments as such. They are, rather, samples or tokens of rewards and punishments. We may say that this whole world is a show room of *Ākhirah* (the Hereafter) where the trader displays the demonstration pieces of his merchandise in front of his store or shop so that they could attract the buyer. Thus, we can see that worldly prosperity or poverty, happiness or sorrow are not reward and punishment in the real sense. Actually, they are a method of bringing the creation of Allah alienated from its Creator back to His fold.

At the end of verse 42 itself, this element of wisdom finds expres-

sion through the words: **لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ** (so that they may supplicate in humility). It means that the hardship inflicted on them during their life in the present world was really not aimed at punishing them. Since everyone turns to Allah naturally when in distress, the purpose was to make people turn to Allah through a little hardship. This tells us that the hardship or pain which visits a person or group as punishment is, in a sense, the working of Divine mercy.

As for the statement: **فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ** (We opened for them doors of everything) appearing in the third verse (44), it warns human beings at large that no one should be deceived by seeing the affluence of persons or groups and hasten to the conclusion that these were the people on the correct path and that their life was a model of success. One should never forget that among them there could be some of those disobedient ones who have been picked out to be seized with sudden and grave punishment.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** said: When you see blessings and wealth raining upon someone - though he is deep in sin and disobedience - then, know that he is being lured into destruction (*Istidrāj*), that is, his affluence is an indicator of his being seized in punishment. (Narrated by Aḥmad from ‘Āqabah ibn ‘Amir as in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

Following a narration from Sayyidnā ‘Ubādah ibn Al-Ṣāmit, leading commentator Ibn Jarīr has reported that the Holy Prophet **ﷺ** said:

When Allah Ta‘ālā wills to have a nation survive and grow, He creates in them two qualities: (1) moderation in everything they do, and (2) modesty and chastity, that is, abstinence from indulging in what is not right. And when Allah Ta‘ālā wills to destroy a nation, He opens for them the doors of breach of faith (*Khiyānah*), that is, they appear to be successful in the world despite their breaches of faith and wrong doings.

In the last verse (45), it was said that, when the mass punishment of Allah Ta‘ālā came, the people who did wrong were uprooted to the last man. Said immediately after was: **وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ** (And praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds) where the hint given is: Whenever the wrongdoers and the unjust are visited by some punishment or calamity, that is a blessing for the whole world for which people should be grateful

## Verses 46 - 49

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى  
 قُلُوبِكُمْ مِّنْ آلِهٍ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ ۗ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ  
 الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْذَقُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ  
 اللَّهِ بَغْتَةً أَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلِكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَمَا  
 نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۗ فَمَنْ أَمَنَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا  
 خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا  
 يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Say, "Tell me, if Allah takes away your hearing and your sights and sets a seal on your hearts, which god other than Allah can bring it back to you?" See how We bring forth a variety of Verses, still they turn away. [46]

Say, "Tell me if the punishment of Allah comes upon you abruptly or manifestly, shall any people be destroyed except the unjust?" [47]

And We do not send the messengers but as bearers of good tidings and warners. So, whoever believes and comes to correct himself, then, there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.[48] And those who have belied Our signs, punishment shall visit them, since they used to commit sins. [49]

## Verses 50 - 51

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ وَلَا  
 أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ ۗ إِنْ أَتَّبِعْ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ  
 يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ  
 الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُحْشَرُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ  
 وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

Say, "I do not say to you that with me are the treasures

of Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I follow but that which is revealed to me.” Say, “Is it that a blind person and a sighted one are equal? Do you, then, not reflect?”

[50]

And warn, with it, those who have the fear of being gathered before their Lord, with no one, other than Him, to support or to intercede. May be they abstain.

[51]

## Commentary

### The Demand of Miracles from the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Many miracles and signs of Allah had already appeared before the disbelievers (*Kuffār*) of Makkah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم graced this world as an orphan. Unschooled and untutored, he lived his whole life as a total *Ummiyy* (unlettered). He was born in a land with no scholar or institution of learning, near or far. For a full forty years of his blessed age, he lived before the eyes of the entire people of Makkah in this state of chaste tutorlessness. Then, after forty long years, it was all of a sudden that there gushed forth from his blessed speech such mind-boggling stream of words the eloquence of which challenged and silenced the masters and authorities of Arab diction for ever. Besides being wisdom and meaning at their sublimest, its far reaching insight covered pragmatic human needs too right unto the day of *Qiyāmah*. Along with these, he gifted to the world a practical system for the nurture and flowering of the perfect universal man. No human ingenuity or effort can ever achieve something like this. And the system he brought was no exercise in pure theory for others to build upon, for he himself demonstrated it practically and succeeded in proving that it worked. Thus, the human multitude of his time which had taken to eating, drinking, sleeping and waking as the purpose of their lives likes bulls, goats, horses and donkeys, to them he gave their essential lesson in humanity. He changed their orientation. He made them look up to the high purpose for which they were created. Thus, every period in the blessed life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the great events which took place during it, were all a miracle in their place, and very certainly, a sign of Allah. In such a background, there was no room left for anyone just and reasonable to demand any sign or

miracle.

But, the disbelievers from among the Quraysh, despite this, demanded that miracles of a different kind be shown to them according to their own wishes. Of the miracles demanded by them, there were some Allah Almighty showed to them clearly. They had demanded that they would like to see the moon parted in two. The well-known miracle of *Shaqqul-Qamar* (the parting of the moon) was witnessed, not only by the Quraysh, but by a great number of people living in the world of that time.

But, they kept sticking to their disbelief, obstinacy and hostility despite the manifestation of such a miracle at their own request and ignored the sign of Allah by saying: *إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ* (this is nothing but a continuous magic), that is, it was a magic which has been there for ever. They saw, they understood, yet they kept on asking for ever-new miracles as mentioned earlier (verse 37): *لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ آيَةً وَلَٰكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ* that is, they ask if Muḥammad ﷺ is really the Messenger of Allah, why is it that no miracle has been shown through him? In answer, the Qur‘ān asks the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell them that Allah does have everything within his power. He has Himself manifested many miracles and signs without their asking for them. Similarly, He is quite capable of manifesting miracles they demanded. But, they have to know that there is a customary practice of Allah in this matter. When a people are shown the miracle they have demanded, and then, when they do not come to believe in it, they are seized by a sudden punishment. Therefore, it was in the very interest of those people that the miracles demanded by them should not be manifested. But, there are many people who still do not understand the wisdom of this action and keep insisting that they be shown miracles of their choosing.

In the present verses, the questions asked and demands made by these people have been dealt with in a particular manner.

The disbelievers of Makkah had presented three demands before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on different occasions: (1) If you are really a Messenger of Allah, bring to us the treasures of the whole world through the power of miracle; (2) If your are really a Messenger of Allah, tell us about everything good and bad going to happen to us

in the future, so that we can arrange to acquire what is good and abstain from what is bad beforehand; and (3) Explain to us for we cannot understand how can someone who is a human being like us, is from us, was born from a mother and father like us, and does things like eating, drinking, and walking around in streets and bazaars as we do, all of a sudden become a Messenger of Allah. Had this been an angel, whose creation and attributes would have been more distinguished than ours, we would have accepted him as a Messenger of Allah, and our leader.

In answer to these questions, it was said:

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ  
إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ .

Say, "I do not say to you that with me are the treasures Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am angel. But, I follow that which is revealed to me."

In other words, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is saying that he can only be asked to prove what he claims, that is, he is a Messenger of Allah. He conveys the guidance given by Him to human beings, and follows it personally and asks others as well to do so. There is no dearth of proofs in this matter for they are many.

So, to prove his prophethood, it is not necessary that the messenger of Allah should become the owner of all the treasures of Allah, nor is it necessary that he should possess the knowledge of everything, big or small, which lies in the domain of the Unseen (*al-ghayb*), nor is it necessary that he be an angel having attributes other than human. Instead of all that, the mission and office of a messenger of Allah is simply to follow the Wahy (revelation) sent from Allah Ta‘ālā - which includes his own acting in accordance with it as well as inviting others to follow it.

These are precise rules of Guidance. They not only clarify the reality of the office of a Messenger of Allah (*Rasūl*) but also help erase the false notions about a Messenger entertained by the disbelieving people. And as implied here indirectly, Muslims too have been instructed that they should not take their Messenger to be God as the Christians do, nor assign proprietary rights in Godhood to him. The realization of

their greatness, and love for them, demands that Muslims should not slide into attitudes of excess or deficiency like the Jews and Christians - for the Jews did not hesitate from even killing their prophets while the Christians turned their messenger into a God.

Regarding the meaning of the word: خَزَائِنُ (treasures) appearing in the statement made in the first sentence, that is, 'I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah,' scholars of *Tafsīr* have named many things. But, the Holy Qur'an itself, wherever it has mentioned the treasures of Allah, has said: وَإِنَّ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ (there is not a thing the treasures of which are not with Us - 15:20). This tells us that the sense of 'the treasures of Allah' encompasses everything in this world and cannot be definitely applied to some particular things. As for commentators who have named particular things, they are doing so as an example. Therefore, there is no contradiction here. Finally, let us bear in mind: When this verse clearly declares that the 'treasures of Allah' are not even in the hands of the one foremost among prophets and messengers, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafaḥ صلى الله عليه وسلم, how can we assume that a *Buzurg* (pious elder) or *Walī* (man of Allah) of the Muslim Community could do what they wished and grant anything to anyone as they chose? This is sheer ignorance.

In the third sentence of the answer given in verse 50, was: وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ وَإِنِّي مَلَكٌ which means 'I do not say to you that I am an angel' - because they refused to accept him as a Messenger based on his human identity. [The pattern of this sentence is the same as the first] However, the pattern of the sentence has been changed in the sentence which appears in the middle of these two where the text does not say something like - I do not say to you that I know the Unseen - and what was said actually was: وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ (nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen).

In his *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Abū al-Ḥayyān has pointed out to a subtle justification for this change in diction. According to him, being or not being the possessor of all Divine treasures; and similarly, the likelihood of a person being or not being an angel are things which are related to observation. The addressees of the answer knew it all, they knew that the entire treasures of Allah are not in his hands nor is he an angel. Their demands were simply based on malice and hostility. In reply to them, it would have been enough to say that 'I have never



claimed that I am the owner of the treasures of Allah', or that 'I am an angel.'

But, the problem of '*Ilm al-Ghayb*' (the knowledge of the Unseen) was not something of that nature - because they already had this kind of belief about their astrologers and soothsayers: That they know the Unseen. So, having this kind of belief about the Messenger of Allah was not unlikely - specially when they had also heard many news of the Unseen through the blessed speech of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and had witnessed that they happened as told. Therefore, at this place in the text, a simple negation of the claim and saying was not considered enough. In fact, what was negated was the actual act. He said, "لَا أَعْلَمُ" (nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen). By saying so, also removed was their misunderstanding that a certain knowledge of things Unseen given to an angel or a Rasūl (Messenger) or a *Walī* (man of Allah) through *Waḥy* (revelation) or *Ilhām* (inspiration) from Allah Ta‘ālā, cannot be called '*Ilm al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the Unseen), or its knower, the '*Ālim al-Ghayb* (one who has the knowledge of the Unseen), in accordance with the terminology of the Qur‘ān.

Right from here also comes the clarification that no Muslim can doubt the fact that Allah Ta‘ālā had blessed the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the knowledge of many things of the Unseen, so many as would surpass the combined knowledge of angels and human beings from the first to the last. This is the belief of the entire Muslim *Ummah*. Of course, right along with it, according to countless statements of the Qur‘ān and Sunnah, it is also the belief of all early and later Imāms that the All-Encompassing Knowledge (*al-‘Ilm al-Muḥīṭ*) of the whole universe is the exclusive attribute of none but Allah Ta‘ālā. Neither can an angel or messenger be equal to Him in being the *Khāliq* (Creator), the *Rāziq* (Provider) and *Al-Qādir Al-Mutlaq* (Absolutely Powerful); similarly, nor can anyone be equal to Him in His All-Encompassing Knowledge. Therefore, no angel or prophet, despite having the knowledge of a great many things of the Unseen, can be called '*Ālim al-Ghayb* (the Knower of the Unseen).

But, about the many excellences of our master, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, we can simply say:

بعزاز خدا بزرگ توئی قصه مختصر

*Ba'd az Khudā buzurg tūee qiṣṣah mukhtaṣar!*

After God, you are the revered one that is all!

His excellence in knowledge is ahead of angels, prophets and messengers, but is not equal to the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. Claiming such equality is the path of excess taken in Christianity.

At the end of the verse (50), it was said that the blind and the sighted cannot be equal. It means that they should get rid of their selfish concerns, leave obstinacy and hostility, and see reality as it is so that they may no longer be counted among the blind. For them, the need was to start seeing, to wise up, for they could have their missing sights back with them with a little thought and concern (for what is right and true).

In the next and the last verse (51), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been instructed that, after all these clear statements, if they still remain obstinate, he should draw a line, stop all debate, and get busy with his real mission, that is, the duty of *Tablīgh*, the real mission of prophethood. And onwards from there, let him turn the focus of his call to faith and warning against its rejection to people who believe in being produced before Allah Ta'ālā to give an account of their deeds on the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* - for example, the Muslims - or those who are, at least, no deniers, even if that is in a certain degree of being probable, for they would at least have the apprehension that, perhaps, they may have to be answerable for their deeds.

To sum up, there are three types of people who believe or do not believe in *Qiyāmah*: (1) Those who believe in it as being certain; (2) Those who doubt or waver; and (3) Those who reject it totally. Though, the blessed prophets have been commanded to convey their call and warning to all these three classes of people, as evident from many statements of the Holy Qur'an. But, as the likelihood that the call will be more effective among the first two classes of people is more pronounced, instruction has been given in this verse to pay special attention to them: وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُجْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ (And warn, with it, those who have the fear of being gathered before their Lord).

## Verses 52 - 55

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ  
وَجْهَهُ ۗ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ  
عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ  
فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِيَقُولُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ  
بَيْنِنَا ۗ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ  
يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ  
الرَّحْمَةَ ۗ أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ  
وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَفْصِلُ الْآيَاتِ  
وَلِتَسْتَبِينَ سَبِيلُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

And do not expel those who call their Lord morning and evening seeking His pleasure. You are not responsible for anything in their account and they are not responsible for anything in your account that you expel them out and thus become one of the unjust. [52]

And in this way We have tested some of them through some others, that they say, "Are these the ones, from among us all, whom Allah has favoured?" Is it not that Allah knows the grateful best? [53]

And when those who believe in Our verses come to you, say, "Peace on you. Your Lord has prescribed for Himself the mercy that whoever does something bad in ignorance, then repents after that and corrects himself, then He is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [54] And that is how We make the verses elaborate, so that the way of the guilty may become exposed. [55]

### Commentary

#### In Islam there is No Distinction between Rich and Poor, High or Low

As for people who failed to feel human despite being human, even touched the outer limit of rating human beings as one of the smartest

animals of the world, who did not hesitate in harnessing other 'animals' in their service, what would they know about the purpose of creation other than taking the fulfillment of their immediate physical compulsions and needs, and acting in accordance with animal instincts as the purpose of their lives - very much like an animal would do. When this be the only purpose of life, then, it is also obvious that the criterion of recognizing good and bad, small or big, high or low, noble or mean can hardly be any other than whoever has more and better to eat and drink, wear and use up, and things and resources to live around with and hold on to, shall be successful, honourable and noble - and whoever has less of these shall be low life and doomed!

The truth of the matter is that, given this view of life, talking about good morals and good deeds as a criterion of judging the nobility of human beings remains out of the question. In that case, only that deed will be good and that morality will be virtuous through which these animal objectives could be fully realized.

Therefore, the first and the last lesson given by the blessed prophets and the religions they brought with them was that there is a life after this life, which will be eternal and uninterrupted. Its peace will be perfect and eternal, and so will be its pain, perfect and eternal. The life of the present world is not its own purpose. Instead of that, the real purpose of this transitory life is to get together everything which is going to come out handy in the other life - (delightfully summarized with a punch by an Urdu poet who said):

رہا مرنے کی تیاری میں مصروف

مرا کام اور اس دنیا میں تھا کیا

Remained busy getting ready to die -

What else was that I had to do in this world?

This is the line of distinction between human beings and animals - that animals have no concern for the next life, contrary to human beings whose greatest concern, at least in the sight of reasonable and far-sighted people, is to correct, nurse and build the prospects of the next life. Given this belief and point of view, the standard of nobility and menialness, honour and disgrace will obviously not be eating and drinking lavishly, living plentifully or qualitatively, or making and

holding wealth and property greedily - instead, the standard will be good morals and righteous deeds on which depends the real honour of the *Ākhirah* (Hereafter).

Whenever people in this world have shifted away from the teachings of the prophets عليهم السلام and from belief in the *Ākhirah*, the natural outcome was there for everyone to see. Money and things became the cold criterion of character and status. Those successful in this race were taken as high and classy, and whoever was left behind, or remained an under-achiever, was taken to be poor, honourless, mean and low.

Therefore, in all ages (including ours with the loudest claims to democracy and justice), people caught in the maze of worldly life have been practicing class distinction of rich and poor and high and low openly or secretly under a thousand guises whereby they would assign all virtues to the rich and influential and condemn the poor as low-life.

This is what the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did. They criticized the believing poor following this standard, when they said that they would not sit with such lowly people. They said that if he wished them to hear his message, he should first turn those poor wretches out of his company. They even said: قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِرُ لَكَ وَأَتَّبَعَكَ الْأَلْدَلُونَ [26:111]. It means: ‘How can it be that we are to believe in you while those following you are lowly people?’ Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام answered their heart-rending remark in his own prophetic diction when he said: وَمَا عَلِمُوا بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّ جِسَابَهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّي كَوْنَتَشْعُرُونَ [26:112]. It means: ‘I do not know about what they do (which could help him decide whether they were high or low) so (the reality of everyone’s deeds and) their accounting is the responsibility of none but my Lord (who is aware of the secrets of the hearts), if you understand.’

By saying so, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام brought these ignorant and arrogant people oblivious of the reality of human nobility and ignobility to see the truth of the matter - as they were the ones who used these terms without knowing what they really meant and just went ahead stamping the rich as noble and the poor as wretched, while money is no criterion of virtues and vices. The criterion is deeds and morals. At this occasion, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام could have said that those people were nobler and more respectable than them as far as the standard of

deeds and morals was concerned. But, his prophetic method of preaching and correcting did not permit him to say something like that lest his addressees are provoked adversely. Therefore, he thought it to be sufficient to say that lowliness depended on deeds and since he did not know about their deeds fully, he could not decide as to who was noble and who was not.

The same thing has been happening in every age, after the age of Sayyidnā Nūḥ, when poor people of successive times, no matter how noble and respectable in terms of their morals and deeds they may have been, were still down-graded as lowly by materialistic and arrogant people. Yet, these were the people who, guided by their far-sightedness and good morals, were the first ones to say yes to the call of prophets in one after the other age. In fact, for later scholars of religions and communities this became the proof of the veracity of a prophet that his early followers are the poor ones of the community. This was the reason why, when the letter of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reached the Byzantine ruler, Heracles (Hiraql) inviting him to embrace Islam, he wished to investigate into the veracity of his prophethood. For this purpose, he asked from people who knew the Prophet of Islam some questions. One of these questions was: Whether most of his followers were from among the rich, or the poor? When he was told that they were poor people, he said: These are usually the first followers of messengers and prophets.

The same question rose again during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Its answer appears in the present verses with particular instructions.

Reports Ibn Kathīr from Imām Ibn Jarīr: Some chiefs of disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh - 'Utbah, Shaybah, Ibn Rabi'ah, Muṭ'im ibn 'Adiyy, Ḥārith ibn Nawfal and others - came to the Holy Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib and said to him: One of the problems, which stops us from listening to and accepting what Your nephew Muḥammad ﷺ tells us, is that people who surround him all the time are either our slaves who were set free by us, or they are people who were living at our mercy only. Now, with such lowly people around him, we cannot attend his sittings. You tell him, if he would ask these people to leave when it is time for us to come in, we could listen to him and think about it.

When his uncle, Abū Ṭalib reported this to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā ‘Umar offered his advice by saying: What is wrong with it? Try this too for a few days. These people love us and they are not formal. When these chiefs are to come, they would move away from the sitting.

Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been emphatically prohibited to do something like that. It was after the revelation of the verse that Sayyidnā ‘Umar had to apologize by admitting that his advice was wrong.

And these poor people about whom this conversation took place were, at that time, no less a people than Sayyidnā Bilāl al-Ḥabashī, Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb ar-Rūmī, Sayyidnā ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir, Sayyidnā Sālīm Mawlā Abī Ḥudhayfah, Ṣabīḥ Mawlā Usayd, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd, Sayyidnā Miqdād ibn ‘Amr, Sayyidnā Mas‘ūd Ibn al-Qārī, Sayyidnā Dhush-Shimālyn, and other noble *Ṣaḥābah* (may Allah be pleased with all of them) the testimonial of whose nobility and honour came from the heavens. And at another place in the Holy Qur‘ān, the same subject was stressed upon in these words:

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدَاوَةِ وَالْعِشْيِ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنِكَ عَنْهُمْ يُرِيدُونَ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَلَا تَطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ه

And hold your self with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure only. And do not cast your eyes (for others) beyond them, seeking the embellishment of the present life. And do not obey the one whose heart We have made neglectful of Our remembrance, and who follows his own desires, and whose case is that of excess - 18:28.

In the present verse, the quality of these poor people has been identified as: They call on their Lord morning and evening. Here, morning and evening refer to all times of the day and night according to usage. As for calling, it means *‘Ibādah* or worship. Also placed here is a restriction along with this *‘Ibādah*, at whichever time of the day and night it may be, that is: *يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ*: ‘seeking Him only.’ This tells us that *‘Ibādah* (worship of Allah) without *Ikhhlās* (absolute sincerity before Him) is not trustworthy.

As for the saying: 'You are not responsible for what is in their account, and they are not responsible for anything in your account,' according to the interpretation of Ibn 'Atīyyah and Al-Zamakhsharī and others, here the pronouns in: *حسابهم* (*Hisābihim* : their account) and *عليهم* (*'Alaihim* : they are not responsible) refers to these chiefs of disbelievers, those who insisted on removing poor Muslims from the gathering at the sitting. So, Allah Ta'ālā told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to bother with them whether, or not, they enter the fold of faith - because he was not responsible for anything in their account, just as they were not responsible for anything in his account. If he were responsible for that, that is, he would have been questioned as to why these people did not become Muslims, then, in that situation, he could have removed the poor Muslims from his sitting just for the sake of the chiefs of the disbelievers. And now, when this is not so, removing them from the sitting was rank injustice. And if he were to do something like that, he would have become one of the unjust.

In the second verse (53), it was said that this is how Allah had tested some of them through some others, so that these chiefs of the disbelievers should be able to see the great subduing power of Almighty Allah when poor Muslims, whom they took to be lowly, reached stations unimaginable and won signal honour and recognition both in this world and in the *Ākhirah*, just because they chose to follow the Messenger of Allah. Then, let them go about saying: Were these poor people the only ones to deserve honours and rewards from Allah and to have been so blessed at the expense of us, the noble ones?

According to *Kashshāf* and other classic commentories, this saying of theirs is an outcome of their trial taken through poor and weak Muslims. They failed in this test. Rather than ponder over this great demonstration of Allah's absolute power and conclude therefrom that nobility does not depend on wealth or power, instead, it does on morals and deeds - they started blaming Allah for giving them the honour while they were the ones deserving of it. In answer, Allah Ta'ālā once again pointed out to the reality behind it by saying: *أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّاكِرِينَ* (Is it not that Allah knows the grateful best?) It means that Allah knows best as to who has the taste for truth and aptitude for gratitude. In other words, in the real sense, a person of nobility and honour is he



who recognizes the right of his Benefactor and is grateful to Him, and it is he who is deserving of all reward and honour - and definitely not the one who, day in and day out, despite being soaked with the blessings of his Provider and Benefactor, goes on disobeying Him.

### Some Injunctions and Instructions

Given below are some injunctions and instructions which emerge from these verses:

1. No one has the right to look down upon anyone in tattered clothes or broken down condition. At times, there are people carrying those outward looks who happen to be very honourable and accepted in the sight of Allah. In a *Hadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: ‘Many a broken-down, dust-stained people are such as are held dear by Allah. If they were to swear by Allah about something that it would be like that, Allah Ta‘ālā does honour their swearing by Him (and lets it be like that).

2. Taking material affluence as the criterion of nobility and lowliness is an insult to humanity. It really depends on good morals and deeds.

3. For a reformer and preacher of any nation, though a universal call which addresses everyone, ayes or nays, followers or dissenters, is necessary, yet, foremost is the right of those who own his teachings and follow it. Putting them as secondary, or ignoring them for the sake of others is not permissible. For example, in the case of Muslims, the education and reform of unaware Muslims should not be put off in favour of carrying the call to non-Muslims.

4. The rewards and blessings of Allah keep increasing in relation to the measure of gratitude. A person who wishes an increase in Divine rewards, must make gratitude, expressed through word and deed, his way of life, a constant of personality.

About verse 54: وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (And when to you come those who believe ... ), there are two interpretations given by leading authorities in *Tafsīr*:

1. Most of them have declared it to be related to previous verses and event. In support, they refer to the narration about the event when the chiefs of Quraysh demanded through Abū Ṭālib that his

nephew should first remove the poor people around him, with whom they could not sit, then they would come and listen to him, and think about it. Thereupon, it was Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه who advised that it did not matter much, for Muslims were sincere friends and if requested they would move out of the sitting so that the chiefs of Quraysh could listen to the Word of Allah and become Muslims.

But, in the previous verses, came the command against this advice that this should never be done. Doing this would be cruel and unjust. The revelation of this verse made Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه realize the gravity of his error. He feared he had become a sinner by advising against what was the will of Allah. He came to tender his apology for it.

Thereupon, the present verses were revealed to comfort him. In gist, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked here to assure them that there will be no retribution for their past mistakes. In fact, not simply that there will be no retribution for the mistake, but that they will also be blessed in many ways by the most merciful Allah. He has also been asked to tell them about His Law that if a Muslim does something evil in ignorance, then gets alerted, repents and corrects his ways for the future, Allah Almighty will forgive him his past sins - and will also not deprive him of His blessings in this world and in the world to come. According to this explanation, these verses were revealed as related to this particular event described in previous verses.

2. Some commentators have taken these verses to be carrying an independent set of rules for guidance. These relate to people who have committed a sin, then felt ashamed of what they did, and repented, and corrected their ways.

A little deliberation will show that there is no contradiction between the two sayings - because it is universally agreed that an injunction of the Holy Qur'an which has been revealed in the background of a particular event, subject to the condition of its words and subject being general, shall not remain restricted to that event, instead of which, it shall have the status of a general injunction. Therefore, even it were to be granted that the said verses did come to be revealed about the event mentioned, still then, this injunction shall have the status of a general rule of conduct which will cover every sinner who

gets alarmed even after having committed the sin, then feels ashamed, repents, corrects and turns watchful for the future.

Now let us turn to a fuller explanation of these verses. It is said in the first verse (54): *وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ*: It means: When those people come to him who believe in His *Āyat* (the word, ‘*Āyat*’, at this place, could mean the *Āyat* or Verses of the Qur‘ān, and the *Āyat* or general signs of the perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhu* as well), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been instructed to address them by saying: *سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ* (Peace be upon you). Here, ‘*Salāmun ‘Alaikum*’ could have two meanings. It could either mean: Convey to them the *Salām* or greetings of Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhu* - which is the highest honour they could receive. Given this interpretation, that becomes the best antidote for the heart-break of poor Muslims, about whom the chiefs of the Quraysh had said that they should be removed from the gathering before they come. Or it could also mean: You give them the good news of their being safe and protected - that is, if they have fallen short or even made a mistake in what they have done, that will stand forgiven, and that they shall stay protected against all sorts of calamities.

In the next sentence of the verse: *كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ*, the promise of additional favour and reward has been made by saying : You tell these Muslims that Allah has taken it upon Himself that mercy shall be shown to them. Therefore, let them not be frightened or nervous. First of all, by using the word, *Rabb*, the assertion in the verse has been provided with a proof - that Allah is your Nurturer, Nourisher, Sustainer. It is obvious no nurturer would let what is being nurtured go to waste. Then, the mercy which was promised by that *Rabb* has been further clarified through a weighty, yet endearing, statement that ‘their *Rabb* has prescribed this mercy on Himself’. It is obvious when even an average good person would not go back on his promise, how could this be ever imagined when referred to the Lord of the Worlds Himself, specially so when this promise has been preserved as a written document.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and in the Musnad of Aḥmad, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta‘ālā created the whole creation and determined the destiny of every-

one, then, in a Book with Him on the ‘Arsh, He wrote: *إِنَّ رَحْمَتِي غَلَبَتْ غَضَبِي* (My Mercy is dominant over My Wrath).

And Sayyidnā Salīm *رضى الله عنه* says: We have seen written in the Torah, when Allah created the heavens and the earth and the entire creation in them, He divided His mercy in a hundred parts. One part from this He distributed all over the creation - and wherever any effect of this mercy is found among human beings, animals and other elements of creation, that owes itself to this same part. The mutual love and concern found among parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, among relatives, neighbours and friends, are all the outcome of this share from the mercy of Allah. The rest of the ninety nine parts of mercy have been kept by Allah Ta‘ālā for Himself. There are other narrations in which this has been described as a *Hādīth* from the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*. This goes to show the quality and extent of Allah’s mercy for His creation.

It goes without saying that no ‘*Ibādah* (worship) or ‘*Iṭā‘ah* (obedience) can be good enough so as to be considered as presentable before Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhu* - neither by an angel nor by a human being. We should not see our ‘*Ibādah* and ‘*Iṭā‘ah* and good deeds in isolation. If we were to look at them as related to the highest of the high, we would humbly realize that what we have been able to do was not any better than what is simply bad. Still one has to be thankful for being able to do what was possible specially when no human being is free of real evils and sins - unless protected by Allah. Under this situation, justice would have demanded that no one remains safe from a general punishment. But, what is actually happening is that every human being is being showered with the blessings of Allah all the time. This, then, is the direct outcome of that mercy which the great Lord-Nourisher of the universe has put it down in writing as His responsibility.

### Every Sin is Forgiven by *Taubah* [Repentance]

This perfect mercy of Allah appears mentioned in the form of a rule in the third sentence of verse 54: *أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غُفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ* It means: One of you who happens to have done something bad by having acted ignorantly, then repents after that and corrects his conduct, then Allah Almighty is most forgiving, He will forgive him his

sins; and He is very merciful, so forgiveness alone will not be considered enough, for he will be blessed with rewards also.

From the word, “*جَاهِلًا*” (*Jahālah*; literally: ignorance, used in the sense of acting ignorantly) one may think that this promise of forgiveness is valid only when a sin is committed in a state of ignorance, not knowing what is being done - and the commitment of a sin knowingly would be considered excluded from the purview of this injunction. But, this is not true - because *Jahālah* (ignorance) here means acting ignorantly which refers to the act of ignorance, that is, one ends up doing something as would have been done by one who is ignorant and unaware of the outcome of his or her act. It is not necessary that the doer of the act be ignorant in reality. This is confirmed by the use of the word *Jahālah* itself - as the word, *Jahalah* has been used here instead of using the word, *Jahl*, most likely to point out to this refinement in meaning. The reason is that *Jahl* (also meaning ignorance) is an antonym of ‘*Ilm* (Knowledge) while *Jahālah* stands in contrast to forbearance and dignity. In other words, the word, *Jahālah* is employed, in usage, to ignorance which is demonstrated practically, in deed. A little thought will reveal that a sin, whenever it is committed by someone, comes about to be because of this practical ignorance. Therefore, some pious elders have said that a person who acts against any command given by Allah and His Messenger is *Jāhil* (ignorant). It refers to this very practical ignorance. For this, it is not necessary to be uninformed and lacking in knowledge - because countless definitive statements of the Holy Qur‘ān and Ṣaḥīḥ *Aḥādīth* (*Naṣṣ*) prove that every sin can be forgiven by making *Taubah* (repentance), whether committed by heedlessness or ignorance, or knowingly and deliberately through self-wickedness or a blinded following of (the drum-beats of) one’s own desire.

At this point, it is also worth noticing that the promise of mercy and forgiveness made to sinners in this verse is conditioned with two things: (a) *Taubah* (repentance), and (b) the *Iṣlāḥ* of ‘*Amal* (the correction of misdeed). *Taubah* means being ashamed of the sin. Says the *Ḥadīth*: *إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ النَّدَامَةُ* (*Taubah* or repentance is another name of *Nadāmah*, that is, being ashamed of or having remorse).

As for the second condition, that is, the correction of deed, it means

that one should see to it that what happened before will not be repeated in the future. So, this process of trying to better one's doings includes the making of a firm determination not to go near that sin ever again by fully auditing and checking one's behaviour at all times, and also included here is that all rights belonging to someone which have been violated or compromised because of that sin, should be compensated to the best of one's capability. They may be the Rights of Allah (*Huqūqullāh*) or the Rights of the Servants of Allah (*Huqūq al-Tbād*). Examples of the Rights of Allah are: Falling short in the duties and obligations like *Ṣalāh*, *Ṣawm*, *Zakāh* and *Hajj*. And the examples of the Rights of the Servants of Allah are: Usurping someone's property unlawfully, to attack someone's honour, and to cause pain to someone by using bad language or causing such pain in some other manner.

Therefore, for *Taubah* (repentance) to be total and complete, the way it is necessary to first feel ashamed of the past sin, then seek forgiveness from Allah Ta‘ālā, then resolve to keep one's conduct correct and straight in the future and never go near that sin again - similarly, it is also necessary that the prayers (*Ṣalāh*) and fasts (*Ṣawm*) which were missed due to heedlessness should be replaced by doing *Qaḍā'* for them. Then, any *Zakāh* which has not been paid earlier should be paid now. If there is a shortcoming in taking care of what was obligatory in *Qurbānī* (Sacrifice) or *Ṣadaqatul-Fitr* (post-Ramaḍān charity for the poor and needy), that should be paid off. If one has not done his or her Hajj, despite its being *Fard*, an absolute obligation, one should do it now; and if it is not possible to do so personally, one should arrange to have it done on his or her behalf (*Hajj Badal*). And if, one does not have the time to arrange for an authorized proxy for Hajj, and does not have the convenience to personally make up for whatever was missed and the *Qaḍā'* of which had become due - during his lifetime - then, he or she should make a *Waṣīyyah* (will) so that their inheritors or heirs could take care of paying the *Fidyah* (ransom) of the obligations due against him or her, or make arrangements for Hajj on his or her behalf. In short, for 'the correction of deed,' the correction of the future conduct only is not enough - it is also necessary to make amends by paying off for obligations left unperformed in the past.

Similar is the case of the Rights of the Servants of Allah (*Huqūq al-*

(*Ibād*). If someone's property has been taken unlawfully, it should be returned to him, or have him forgive it. And if someone has been caused pain physically or verbally, forgiveness must be sought from the aggrieved person. And if, it is not possible or within one's control to have him forgive it - for example, he dies; or goes away to a place the address of which is not known - then, the way out is that one should make it a point to keep praying for his forgiveness before Allah Ta'ālā consistently. If so, it can be hoped that the holder of the right will be pleased and the person who was unable to have the forgiveness of the deceased during his lifetime will become absolved of what was due on him.

### Verses 56 - 58

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُلْ لَا  
 أَتَّبِعُ أَهْوَاءَكُمْ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذَا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾  
 قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ مَاعِنْدِي  
 مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ يَقْضُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ  
 الْفَاصِلِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِيَ  
 الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

Say, "I have been forbidden from worshipping those you call beside Allah." Say, "I do not follow your desires. In that case, I would be going astray and would no more be of those on the right path. [56]

Say, "I am on clear guidance from my Lord, and you have belied it. What you hurry about is not there with me. The Decision belongs to none but Allah. He relates the Truth and He is the best decision-maker. [57] Say, "If what you hurry about were with me, the matter between me and you would have been over. And Allah knows the unjust best." [58]

### The Linkage of Verses

In the verses cited above, the answer to disbelievers who were demanding that the Divine punishment should come to them posthaste

was given in: **وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ** (He is the best decision-maker) while the mention of the perfect power of Almighty Allah was made in: **وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ** (Allah knows the unjust best). Next from here, there is a description of the encompassment of the Knowledge and Power of Allah Ta‘ālā on all conceivable data and destiny.

### Verses 59 - 62

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبُرِّ  
وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظِلْمٍ  
الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٩﴾  
وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُم بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ  
فِيهِ لِيُقْضَىٰ أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا  
كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
حَفَظَةً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَكُمْ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ  
لَآيْفِرُّونَ ﴿٦١﴾ ثُمَّ رُدُّوْا إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقُّ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ  
الْحُكْمُ ۗ وَهُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحَاسِبِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾

And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it, nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but are in a manifest book. [59]

And He is the One who takes you away by the night and knows what you do by the day, then He makes you rise therein, so that a fixed term may be fulfilled. Thereafter, to Him you are to return; then He will tell you what you have been doing. [60]

And He is Dominant over His slaves and He sends to you those who take care of you until when death comes to one of you, Our deputies take him in full, and they neglect nothing. [61] Then they are returned to Allah, their real Master. Behold, to Him belongs the judgement, and He is the swiftest reckoner. [62]



## Commentary

### How to Stay Safe from Sins - The Master Prescription

Of all the religions of the world, belief in *Tauḥīd*, monotheism in its pure and applied form, is the distinctive feature of Islam. It is also obvious that *Tauḥīd* is not limited to taking the being of Allah Ta'ālā as one. Instead, *Tauḥīd* is believing in Him as being unique and without equal in all His attributes of perfection and in not taking any created being, other than Him, to be a sharer or partner in these attributes of perfection.

Some of these attributes of Divine perfection are: Life, Knowledge, Power, Hearing, Seeing, Will, Creation, Sustenance. Allah is so perfect in all His attributes that no created being can be equal to Him in any of the attributes. Then, out of these, two attributes are most distinct. These are Knowledge (*Ilm*) and Power (*Qudrah*). His Knowledge encompasses and embraces all existents and non-existents, open and secret, large or small, atoms and particles. So it is with His Power which surrounds and controls everything fully and conclusively. The two verses (59 & 60) cited above describe these two attributes - and these two attributes are mysteriously unique. If anyone were to bring himself around to believe in these two attributes strongly and completely, and thereby start imagining them as being present before him, then, he just cannot ever even think of committing a crime or sin. It goes without saying that here is a person who, in all states of word and deed, rest and movement, remains conscious of the presence and knows that there is someone All-Knowing, All-Aware, All-Powerful watching over him all the time, and Who knows him outside in and inside out and Who is aware of even the intention of the heart and the passing thought of the mind, then, how would he ever be able to take even a tiny step towards any disobedience to his All-Powerful Master? This is the legendary philosopher's stone of what is known as *Istihḍār* in religious terminology [or, to make it more recent, it is like building a web site in your heart with this frame of reference being always online, just click and connect! - Tr.]

In the end, we can say that these two verses are sovereign prescriptions which can make one a model human being, correct and groom deeds and morals, and keep them that way all along.

It was said in the first verse (59): وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يُعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ (And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He). The word, ‘مَفَاتِحُ’ (*Mafāṭiḥ* : keys) is plural. Its singular can be: مَفْتِاحٌ : *Maf-tah*, pronounced with a vowel point a on the letter *Mim*, which denotes treasure; and it could also be: مِفْتَاحٌ : *Miftāḥ*, pronounced with a vowel point i on the letter *Mim*, which means key. The word, *Mafāṭiḥ* accommodates both meanings. Therefore, some commentators and translators have rendered it as treasures while some others take it as keys. The outcome, however, is the same because owning the keys to the treasures is taken as the owning of the treasures.

### **Knowledge of the Unseen and Absolute Power: Two Attributes of Allah, not shared by anyone**

‘*Al-Ghayb*’ means things which have not come into existence, or in existence they have come but Allah Ta‘ālā has not let anyone know them (*Mazhari*). The first kind relates to conditions and events about *Qiyāmah*, or future happenings in the universe - for example, who will be born when and where? Who will do what? Who will live how long? Who will have how many breath counts? Who will take how many steps? Who will die where and buried where? Who will get what sustenance, and how much, and at what time? When will it rain, and where, and how much?

The example of the second kind is the foetus which has come to exist in the womb of a woman, but no one can be certain in the absolute sense, as universally applicable with inevitable reliability and accessibility, about the foetus being good natured or bad tempered, handsome or ugly, even a male or female (the radiological determination of which at the later trimesters of pregnancy is a different matter and does not affect the premises of the present discussion). Similar is the case of many other things which, despite having come into existence, remain unseen and unknown to the created beings.

So, the sentence: عِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ means that with Allah are the keys (or treasures) of the Unseen. The sense of being ‘with him’ (عِنْدَهُ) is that they are owned by Him and are in His possession. The outcome is that He is the One who has control of the treasures of the Unseen and it is He who has the exclusive power to bring them into existence and make them manifest as and when He has determined. This is as has been

said in another verse of the Holy Qur'an : *وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِلُهُ إِلَّا بِالْقَدْرِ مَعْلُومٍ* which means: We have treasures of everything, but We send them down in a particular measure (15:21).

In short, from this one sentence, it stands proved that the knowledge of Allah is perfect, and so is His power, and also that this all-encompassing knowledge and absolute power is the exclusive attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, and that no one can acquire or have it. By putting the word, *عِنْدَهُ* (*indahū*: with Him) before, according to the rules of the Arabic grammar, a pointed reference has been made towards this restriction and particularity. Immediately after, this hint has been changed into full clarity when, to drive the point home, it was said: *لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ* (No one knows them but He).

So, this sentence proves two things: (1) The awareness of Allah about everything Unseen by virtue of His all-encompassing knowledge, and His being dominant over all of them by virtue of His perfect power; and (2) The inability of any created being or thing, other than Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, to acquire or have such knowledge and power.

The meaning of the word, '*Al-Ghayb*' (Unseen), as in the terminology of the Qur'an, which has been stated above (with reference to Tafsir Mazhari) - that it means things which have not yet come into existence, or have come into existence but have not yet been fully unveiled to any created being - was to be kept in sight, the common doubts which bother people when they take a shallow view of the question of *Ghayb*, would be automatically removed.

Usually what happens is that people take the word, *Al-Ghayb* (Unseen) in a literal sense, that is, that which is absent from our knowledge and perception - whether the sources of acquiring its knowledge be present in the sight of others - thus, they would start calling that too as the *Ghayb*. As a result, all sorts of doubts abound. Take the example of astrology, divination of fortunes mathematically (*Ilmul-Jafr* : The knowledge of *Jafr*; vulg. '*Jafar*'), geomancy (*Ilmur-Raml*: The knowledge of *Raml*; vulg. '*Ramal*', meaning divination by means of figures and lines in the sand), or palmistry and things like that which are harnessed to acquire the knowledge of future events. Or, there may be someone who gets to know about future events through *Kashf* (illumination) and *Ilhām* (inspiration). Or, there are our

weather forecasters who by examining things like the drift, power and velocity of the monsoons predict rains and storms a lot of which turns out to be right too. But, common people hasten to take all these to be the Knowledge of the Unseen. Therefore, they start doubting about these verses of the Holy Qur'ān thinking that the Qur'ān tells us that the *'Ilm* of the *Ghayb*, the knowledge of the Unseen, is an attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, while observation shows that others too get to acquire it.

The answer is clear. If Allah Ta'ālā has made one of His servants informed on some future event, that then, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, does not remain what the *'Ilm* of *Ghayb* or the knowledge of the Unseen is. Similarly, in accordance with the Qur'ānic terminology, knowledge (*'Ilm*) which can be acquired through means and instruments (technology) is no Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*). Examples of this could be the weather reports of the meteorological departments and bureaus, or the diagnosis of the hidden condition of a patient by feeling the pulse (manually or instrumentally). The reason is that the weather forecaster or the physician got the chance to announce such information only when the substance of these events comes into existence and becomes obvious. The only difference is that it does not manifest itself openly until that time; it reveals itself, through technical instruments, to experts. People at large remain unaware. And when this substance becomes stronger, its manifestation becomes common. For this reason, weather forecasters cannot come up with what would be the breaking news of rains that will come one or two months from now - because the substantial evidence of rains has not presented itself before them. Similarly, no physician can diagnose the status of medicine or food taken a year or two ago, or a year or two after, by feeling the pulse (manually or instrumentally) today - because that does not habitually leave any effect on the pulse.

In short, these are things the existence of which is foretold by examining their traces and signs. Now, when the traces, signs and substances of these have come into existence, that does not remain part of the Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*); rather, it has become a matter of observation. However, because of its being refined or weak, it has not become public knowledge. When it becomes stronger, it will

become a matter of common observation too.

In addition to this, the awareness acquired from all these things, despite that so much has taken place, still remains in the class of estimation and calculation. The real '*Ilm*' or Knowledge is the name of Certitude. That does not come out of any of these. That is why events attesting to the error of such information are many and frequent.

As for astrology and other disciplines, whatever there is based on mathematical computation is knowledge, but not *Al-Ghayb* (Unseen). It is like someone computes existing data and says that the sun will rise today at the hour of five and forty one minutes; or, there will be a solar or lunar eclipse on such and such date in such and such a month.

It is obvious that determining time by calculating the speed of that which is perceptible through the senses is very much like announcing the news of planes and trains reaching airports and stations. Moreover, the claim to be able to know things through astrology etc. is nothing but deception. The emergence of one truth out of a hundred lies is no knowledge.

When X-Ray equipment was invented, it was hoped that the determination of the sex of the foetus will be possible, but it did not serve the purpose satisfactorily (besides being radiologically harmful). Experts in our time (specially those associated with digital imaging who study the foetus in section view, or use water-induced method to let the foetus float in the womb which helps determine digitally if it is a boy) too are helpless as far as the first trimester of pregnancy is concerned. Nothing can be known at that stage.<sup>1</sup> But, during the later trimesters, predictions are made which can be called technical approximations at best and cannot be classed as certain knowledge and absolute awareness. Sometimes predictions can be correct, at others faulty or misread. This is not the Certitude of '*Ilm al-Ghayb*', nor qualifies as such.

The gist of the assertion is: That which is *Al-Ghayb* in the terminology of the Qur'ān is something no one knows but the most sacred

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1. Even the test of genes to determine the gender of a child, cannot work before a certain stage of pregnancy which again is a matter of observation, and not the knowledge of the unseen. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Allah. As for what people habitually get to know through causation or instrumentation is not really the *Ghayb* - though, it may be so called because of not having been manifested openly.

Similarly, when part of the knowledge of what belongs to the *Ghayb* has been given to some prophet or messenger, through *Wahy* (revelation), or to a man of Allah (*Waliy*) through *Kashf* (illumination) and *Ilhām* (inspiration), that then, does not remain *Ghayb*. This is called 'أَنْبَاءُ الْغَيْبِ' (the reports or news of the Unseen) in the Holy Qur'an, and not *Al-Ghayb*. This appears in several verses of the Qur'an, for example: تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ (These are some reports from the Unseen [events] which We reveal to you - 11:49). Therefore, when it is said: لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ (No one knows them but He) in the present verse, there is no room for any doubt or exemption in it.

In this particular sentence, a special attribute of Allah has been pointed out - that He is the Knower of the Unseen ('*Ālim al-Ghayb*). The sentences that follow contain a description of the knowledge of the Seen ('*Ilmush-Shahādah*), that is, the knowledge of things present and existing, in sharp contrast to the knowledge of the Unseen ('*Ilmul-Ghayb*). They too establish that the knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* is all-encompassing leaving not the minutest particle outside its reach. It was said: And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it, nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth, which too is within His knowledge; and so is, in His knowledge, everything fresh or wet or dry in the whole universe - and all of which lies recorded in writing on *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*, the Preserved Tablet.

To sum up, it can be said that Allah Ta'ālā has two unique attributes of knowledge in which no angel or prophet or another created being shares with Him. These are: the Knowledge of the Unseen ('*Ilm al-Ghayb*) and the All-Encompassing Knowledge of existents (*al-Ilm al-Muḥīṭ*). These attributes have been described with a system. The first sentence says: وَأَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ (And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He). This was about the first attribute. In the sentences that follow, the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah about His universe of existents was identified first by saying: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ (And He knows what is in the land and the sea). It

means the whole universe and all existents. This is like saying morning and evening in the sense of all the time or saying the East and the West in the sense of the whole world. Thus, by saying land and sea the sense given is that of the whole universe with its existents. So, the knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhu* covers whatever there is.

Further on, this was explained by saying that the knowledge of Allah Ta‘ālā is not limited to what is big, He also knows what is the minutest and the most concealed: وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا (Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it). It means that the falling of every leaf in the whole wide world - before it falls, when it falls and after it falls - remains within His knowledge. He knows how many times each leaf on a tree will swing and sway and when and where it will fall and through what circumstances it will go through. The mention of ‘fall’ at this place is perhaps indicative of the life cycle of the leaf. Its fall from the tree is the end of its growth and botanical life. Its last condition has been pointed out here as a mirror to the rest of its conditions.

After that it was said: وَلَا حَبَّةٌ فِي ظُلْمَتِ الْأَرْضِ (Nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth). Mentioned first was a leaf which falls in common sight. After that, it was a grain which is sowed in fields by a farmer, or gets buried somewhere in the dark and deep belly of the earth. Then, the same all-surrounding knowledge of Allah has been pointed out through things fresh and dry. In the end it was said that with Allah all these things were present in writing. According to some commentators, ‘كِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ’ (a manifest book) means *al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz*, the Preserved Tablet. Some others say that it denotes Divine Knowledge. It has been identified with ‘a manifest book’ because what is written stays preserved leaving nothing to chance or mistake or forgetting. This is similar to the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhu*, which is not based on conjecture - it is certain.

Many verses of the Holy Qur‘ān confirm that the kind of all-encompassing knowledge from which nothing, neither a particle nor its condition, remains excluded is but that of Allah *Subḥānuhu wa Ta‘ālā*. It was said in Sūrah Luqman:

إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ حَرْدَلٍ فَنَقُصِّ فِي صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ أَوْ فِي  
 الْأَرْضِ يَاتٍ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ

If it be (anything) even equal to the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and though it be in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah is subtle and aware - 31:16.

It appears in the Āyatul-Kursī of Sūrah al-Baqarah:

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۗ

He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills - 2:255

In Sūrah Yunus, it was said:

وَمَا يُعْزِبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

And not hidden from your Lord is (anything even) the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven - 10:61

And it appears in Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭalāq:

وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا،

And that Allah encompasses all things in (His) Knowledge - 65:12

This subject has been dealt with in the Holy Qur'an at many more places where it has been made very clear that the *Ilm* of *Al-Ghayb* (as determined in the Qur'an and explained earlier) or the all-encompassing knowledge of everything in the universe is the exclusive attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. Taking the knowledge of an angel or messenger to be as all-compassing amounts to giving a messenger of Allah the status of Allah Himself and declaring him to be equal to Him - which is Shirk according to the Holy Qur'an. This aspect of Shirk has been pointed out in Sūrah Al-Shu'arā':

تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ إِذْ نُسَوِّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

That is (the *Mushriks* will say in *Qiyamah*), By Allah, we were in an error manifest when we held you (objects of worship) as equals with the Lord of the Worlds - 26:97,98

No doubt, Allah Ta'ālā had blessed His Messengers عليهم السلام, specially the Last among them صلى الله عليه وسلم, with the knowledge of many things from the Unseen, more than the knowledge of all angels and



prophets, but it is obvious that the knowledge of anyone cannot be equal to that of Allah, nor it can ever be. Otherwise, this will become the kind of excess the Christians committed in their reverence for the prophet when they started equating the prophet with God. This is *Shirk*. May Allah keep all of us protected from it.

Covered this far was the subject of the first verse as explained above. The second verse (60) describes Allah's attribute of power which is also exclusive to Him. It is said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُم بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثْكُمْ فِيهِ لِيُقْضَىٰ  
أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ۚ

And He is the One who takes you away by night and knows what you do by day, then He makes you rise therein, so that a fixed term may be fulfilled.

Hence, at work here is nothing but the most perfect power of Allah Ta‘ālā which has opened a window to what happens to human beings in life, in death and in rising again. Everyone sees it everyday. According to *Hadīth*, sleep is similar to death in that it does suspend the human body as it would be in death.

By giving an example of sleeping then waking up in this verse, Allah Ta‘ālā has alerted human beings that the way everyone, every night and every morning, witnesses the spectacle of personally rising up from simulated death (sleep), so it should not be difficult to visualise the certainty of collective death, and then, collective rising after it, which is called *Qiyāmah* or the Last Day. The argument is: The Supreme Being who can make this happen, could make that happen too. With His most perfect Power, this is as it shall be. Therefore, towards the end of the verse it was said: ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (Thereafter, to Him you are to return; then He will tell you what you have been doing) meaning thereby that there will be the reckoning of deeds, then, will come their rewards and punishments.

In the third verse, this subject has been further enlarged by saying that Allah Ta‘ālā has absolute subduing power over all His servants. As long as He wills to have them living, He assigns angels to protect them as a result of which no one dares harm them. And when one has reached the appointed limit of one's age, these very guardian angels

become the agents of one's death without ever falling short in providing the relevant causes leading to one's death. Then, death is not all, for the matter is still not closed. Instead of that, there is the next phase, that of: رُدُّوْا اِلَى اللّٰهِ (Then they are returned to Allah - 62). It means that they will be made to rise again and be presented before Allah Ta‘ālā. If, at this point, one were to think of having to appear before the greatest Judge of judges and stand before Him to account for a whole life-time of deeds, one cannot even dare to imagine to come out unscathed and hope to escape punishment. Therefore, along with it, it was said: اِلَى اللّٰهِ مُوَلِّئُهُمُ الْحَيٰتِ (to Allah, their real Master - 62). It means that Allah Ta‘ālā is not only the Sovereign and the Judge of judges, He is also the Master and Guardian of His servants who reaches out to help them at all times of their need.

After that, it was said: اَلَا لَهٗ الْحُكْمُ (Beware, to Him alone belongs the judgement). This certainly leaves no doubt that He is the best in His decision and decree. However, one may be inclined to think how it will be possible for Allah who is One alone to take care of the reckoning of age-long deeds of billions and billions of human beings? Therefore, after that, it was said: وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِيْنَ (and He is the swiftest reckoner). It means that taking what is done by Allah on the analogy of what is done by human beings is ignorance. He shall do that in no time. (When His servants at the Mainframe factories of Cray and IBM can churn billions and billions of data in seconds, why anyone in his senses would ever doubt the power of the Maker of all makers ! -Tr.)

### Verses 63 - 64

قُلْ مَنْ يِّنَجِيْكُمْ مِّنْ ظُلْمَتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُوْنَهُ تَضَرُّعًا وَّ خَفِيَّۃً لِّئِنْ اَنْجَاكُمْ مِنْ هٰذِهِ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يِّنَجِيْكُمْ مِنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Say, "Who delivers you from the darkneses of the land and the sea when you call Him in humility and low tones (promising that) If He delivers us from this, We shall truly become grateful? [63] Say, "Allah delivers you from it and from every pain, still, you associate partners with Him." [64]

## Commentary

### Some Manifestations of Divine Knowledge and Absolute Power

In previous verses, there was a description of the perfection of Divine Knowledge and Power, and of their unique expanse. Mentioned in the present verse, there are some manifestations of this very Knowledge and Power.

The word: ظُلُمَاتٌ (*Zulumāt*) in the first verse (63) is the plural of ظُلْمَةٌ (*Zulmah*) which means darkness [and which does not have a plural form in English leaving the translator with no choice but to improvise in order to convey the Qur’anic plural which is necessary as explained]. Thus, the expression: ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ in this verse means the many a darkness found on land and sea. Since darkness is of many kinds, such as, the darkness of night, the darkness of rain clouds, the darkness of dust storms and the darkness under the waves of the sea, it is to include all these kinds of darkness that the word, *Zulumāt*, has been used here.

So, the verse means that it was to warn the disbelievers of Makkah against their wrong doings that Allah Ta‘ālā ordered the Holy Prophet ﷺ to ask these people as to what they do when they find themselves in deep trouble during their land trips and sea voyages. Is it not that they would forget all about their idols and start calling on none but Allah? At times, they would confess to their modesty and helplessness openly, while at others, they would be admitting it in the heart of their hearts that no one other than Allah could really save them from such catastrophe. And along with this thought, they would promise to Allah that, should Allah save them from this catastrophe, they would definitely take to the ways of following truth and being grateful. In other words, once delivered, they would be grateful to Allah, would take Him as their real rescuer and helper, never ascribing any partner to His Divinity because no one they have been worshiping came up to help them in their hour of need. With this experience of theirs in view, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is being asked to find out from them as to who delivers them from their distress and possible destruction? Since their answer was already known as they could have not denied the open fact that no one came to help them in their distress, idol or whatever else they worshipped, except Allah. Therefore, in the second verse (64), Al-

lah Almighty has Himself taken the initiative and commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell these people that it is Allah alone who would deliver them from their distress, rather deliver them from every other distress or anxiety they may face in their lives. But, the problem was that they, despite having seen open signs and having found comfort after distress, would go back to *Shirk* and start indulging in the worship of false gods. Strange betrayal and fatal ignorance indeed!

Not only that these two verses tell us about the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which delivers human beings from their hour of distress, it also emphasizes that the removal of all sorts of hardships, troubles and anxieties is also in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā alone as evident from the behaviour of diehard disbelievers too who are ultimately compelled to turn to Allah when there is nothing left to turn to.

### **The Moral**

May be, this behaviour of the disbelievers, despite its being a major crime in view of their betrayal, has a certain lesson to teach. That they do turn to Allah in the hour of their distress, as their confession of reality under duress, has for us Muslims a lesson to learn with the rasp of a lash - here we are still not prompt enough to remember Allah in our hour of trials despite having faith in the absolute power of Allah Ta'ālā. What happens is that all our attention is rivetted only to material support which we hope would get us out of trouble. No doubt, we do not take idols, icons and images as our saviours, but the tragic fact is that the many material support systems, logistics, mechanized rescuing squads on land, sea and in the air, and the backup of spot and distant instrumentations, have become no less than idols for us. So impressed with them and so engrossed in them we are that we somehow do not seem to think of Allah and His most perfect power.

### **Accidents and Hardships : The Real Remedy**

Take sickness as an example. When we get sick, we think of nothing but our doctors and physicians. Take the example of a storm or flood. Once in it, we look forward to being rescued with material help and material means. We think on them depends our destiny, and in doing so, we just do not seem to remember the very Master of the universe in Whose control lies our destiny. We tend to do this, despite

that the Holy Qur'an has, time and again, stated it very clearly that hardships and accidents of the world are generally the outcome of the evil deeds of human beings themselves, and a mild sampling of the punishment of the Hereafter. If looked at from this angle, these hardships are, in a way, mercy for Muslims - for, through them, heedless people are, so to say, given a shot in the arm, so that they may use this occasion to survey their evil deeds and start thinking about how not to indulge in them anymore whereby they could remain safe from the greater and harsher punishment of the Hereafter. The same subject has been taken up elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an in the following words:

وَلَنَذِيْبَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَدْنٰى دُوْنَ الْعَذَابِ الْاَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُوْنَ

We shall make them taste a lesser punishment, prior to the greater punishment, so that they may return - 32:21.

Says another verse of the Qur'an:

وَمَا اَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فِیْمَا كَسَبْتُمْ اَیْدِیْكُمْ وَ یَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِیْرٍ،

The hardship that reaches you is an outcome of your evil deeds while many of them Allah forgives - 42:30.

Talking about the verse of Sūrah Ash-Shūrā quoted above, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

By Him in whose hands lies my life, the common scratch from a piece of wood suffered by a human being, or a faltering of step or an itching in vein are all after-effects of some sin while the sins which Allah Ta'ālā forgives are many.

As said by 'Allāma Al-Bayḍawī, it means that the diseases and calamities faced by criminals and sinners are all vestiges of sins while the diseases and calamities of those who are infallible to or protected from sins are there to test their patience and fortitude, and to bless them with the higher ranks of Paradise.

So, the essential outcome is that the diseases, accidents, hardships, pain and anxiety faced even by human beings at large - who are not free of sins - are all the consequences and vestiges of sins.

This also tells us that the real cure and the primary way out of all such distressing happenings is that people should turn to Allah *Jalla*

*Sha'nuhu*, seek forgiveness from Him for all their past sins, and firmly resolve that they would abstain from them in the future, and pray to Him alone that He, in His mercy, removes their hardships.

However, it never means that the use of material means through medicine and treatment while sick, or to employ material methods of confronting accidents and calamities when struck by them, are useless efforts. Instead of that, the purpose is to emphasize that we should believe in Allah Ta'ālā as the prime mover and maker of things and happenings and, as for the use of material means, we should use them too taking them to be nothing but His blessing, because all means and instruments are invariably His creation and His blessings which serve human beings under His command and will. The fire, the air, the water, the dust, and all forces on the face of the earth are but subservient to the command of Allah Ta'ālā. Unless He so wills, neither can the fire burn, nor can water extinguish, nor a medicine bring benefit, nor some food hurt. Experience bears the truth that human beings once they become heedless to Allah Ta'ālā and start relying on their self-invented defence mechanisms what happens is that with every addition to their material logistics, there comes a relative increase in concerns and calamities.

That a medicine or clinical procedure may turn out to be personally beneficial at a given time, or a material way out to some problem may succeed, is quite possible even when one is involved with heedlessness and sin. But, when looked at collectively, in the perspective of the whole creation of Allah, all manifestations of the reliance on the material appear to be unsuccessful. Today, the number and variety of articles and instruments invented to remove pain and drudgery and to provide comfort and luxury with a gusto that knows no stopping, are things man had not even dreamt of only half a century ago. Who does not know that people at that time were totally deprived of ever-new life-saving drugs, medicine delivery systems, procedures, surgeries, experts, technicians, labs and hospitals and nursing homes? But, seen in a wider perspective, man deprived of all these facilities fifty years ago, was not as sick and harassed as the man of late nineties. Similarly, we have vaccines to fight against epidemics, mechanized units to control fire, medical and para-medical squads to cover accidents, and an

overseeing communications system which would hasten emergency information, relevant support of professionals and equipment. But, somehow the more we increase our material defences against accidents and calamities, the more we seem to be affected by them. To what reason could we ascribe this except that during the period now behind us the measure of heedlessness to and disobedience of the Creator of the universe of our existence was not as pronounced as it is in our day. Those people used their articles of comfort as blessings from Allah Ta‘ālā for which they were grateful too. But, the modern man wants to use these conveniences with a sense of hightened self-achievement which is rebellion in disguise. Naturally enough, despite all instrumentations and gadgeteries, men and materials, they cannot make people immune from being hit by such hardships.

Summing up the main elements of our explanations, we can say that Muslims should specially take a lesson from this reference to disbelievers that they too remembered Allah when in distress. It is the duty of a true Muslim that he should, in order to remove his pain and anxiety in distress, first rely on and turn to Allah Ta‘ālā, much more than simply relying on and turning to the material solutions of his trying situation. If he fails to do that, he will meet the same end being witnessed today. Plans will generally fall flat. A thousand efforts are made to stop floods and to minimize losses caused by them, but they keep coming. Ever-new methods of treating diseases are found and used, but diseases keep increasing. Devices and theories are employed to check rising prices of things - which seem to be effective too, though on the surface - but the result on the whole is that prices keep rising on almost a daily basis. Think of crimes like theft, robbery, kidnaping, bribery and smuggling. Governments all over the world, including the most advanced, are employing all sorts of material means to stop them. But, common people do not have to look into a crime graph to find out what is happening - they see that crimes are increasing. We can only wish that human beings of the modern era would do well by rising a little bit higher than the levels of person, identity, profit and loss, and surveying conditions prevailing, then, they would come to realize that, when seen collectively, all our material efforts have failed, in fact, they are compounding our problems. Then, if they were to look at the remedy proposed by the Qur‘ān which tells us that there is only

one way of staying safe from all kinds of hardship, and that is to turn to the Creator of the universe. Whatever material solutions there are, they are fine, they too should be used as blessings from Him. Other than this, there is no way to ideal security.

### Verses 65 - 67

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ  
 مِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبَسَكُمْ شِيعًا وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ  
 بَعْضٍ ۗ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نَصَّرَفَ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾  
 وَكَذَّبَ بِهِ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ۗ قُلْ لَسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٦٦﴾  
 لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ وَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Say, "He is fully capable that He should send a punishment from above you or from beneath your feet, or to put you in confusion through divisions and make some of you taste troubles through some others." See how We bring forth a variety of Verses, so that they may understand. [65] And your people have belied it despite its being the truth.

Say, "I have not been entrusted with your task. [66] For every event there is a point (of time and place) to occur, and (that) you will know." [67]

### Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was one manifestation of the knowledge and power of Allah Almighty that He alone can remove human distress and whoever calls on Him while in difficulty shall find His help before his eyes. The reason is that He is perfectly powerful over the whole universe and He is also perfectly merciful to His entire creation. No one else has that perfect power and universal mercy.

Mentioned in the present verses is another side of His perfect power - that He can punish any individual or group for its contumacy if He wills to do so. And doing so is easy for Him. To punish a criminal, He needs no police or army or helper like the rulers of the mortal world. This aspect was stated by saying: هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ



أَوْ يُرْسِلْكُمْ أَوْ يُبَدِّلْكُمْ سَيْمًا (He is fully capable that He should send a punishment from above you or from beneath your feet, or to put you in confusion through divisions).

### Three Kinds of Divine Punishment

Identified here are three kinds of Divine Punishment: (1) That which comes from above, (2) that which comes from beneath, and (3) that which spreads out from within. Then, by bringing the word, ‘عَذَابًا’ with nunnation (*tanwin*) on an indefinite noun (*nakirah*), a warning - as admitted by the rules of Arabic grammar - has been served that there could be different sub-divisions and forms within these three kind.

According to commentators of the Qur‘ān, there have been many examples of punishment coming from above among past communities as the flood which came upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, the wind storm which overtook the people of ‘Ād, the raining of stones on the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, the raining of blood and frogs upon the Banī Isra‘īl and the pelting of pebbles by flights of birds on the People of the Elephant (*aṣḥāb al-fīl*) when they invaded Makkah which left all of them reduced to chaff chewed out.

Similarly, various forms of the coming of punishment from beneath have also appeared among past communities. For the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام there already was the punishment from above in the form of rain-storm, then they were also caught up in the punishment from beneath when the water under the ground started forcing out whereby they came into the grip of two punishments at the same time, that is, the punishment from above and the punishment from beneath. The people of the Pharaoh were drowned in the punishment from beneath their feet. Qārūn (Korah) fell a victim to this very punishment when he, along with his legendary treasures, sank down into the earth as if swallowed by it.

Early *Tafsīr* authorities, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه and Mujāhid have said that the punishment from above means that cruel rulers and merciless officials come to rule over a people while the punishment from beneath means that one’s own subordinates and servants turn into traitors, idlers and thieves.

Some sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also confirm the *Tafsir* of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās given above. The saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which follows has been reported in Mishkāt with reference to Shu‘abul-Īmān of Al-Baihaqī: كَمَا تَكُونُونَ كَذَلِكَ يُؤْمَرُ عَلَيْكُمْ , that is, ‘as are your deeds, good or bad, so shall be your rulers and officials set upon you.’ It means : If you are good, and obedient to Allah Ta‘alā, your rulers and officials will also be merciful and just. And if your deeds are evil, you will find that merciless and unjust rulers and officials have been set upon you.’ The well-known saying: أَعْمَالُكُمْ مَعَالِكُمْ (Your deeds : your rulers) means just the same.

According to a narration from Abī Nu‘aym in his Hilyah appearing in Mishkāt, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

Allah Ta‘alā says: I am Allah. There is no god worthy of worship but Me. I am the Master of kings. And I am the Sovereign. The hearts of kings are in My hands. When My servants obey Me, I pour mercy in the hearts of their kings and officials. And when My servants disobey Me, I harden the hearts of their rulers against them. They make them taste all kinds of evil punishments. Therefore, do not waste your energy in speaking ill of the rulers and officials. Turn to Allah and correct your deeds so that I may put your affairs right.

Similarly, there is a narration from Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها in Abū Dāwūd and Nasā’ī in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said:

When Allah Ta‘alā wishes well for a ruler, He gives them a good minister and deputy so that he may remind the ruler if he forgets something, and who helps the ruler when he acts right. And when some evil is destined for a ruler, evil people are made his ministers and deputies.

In the light of these *Hadīth* narrations and the explanation of related verses, the outcome is that hardships faced by people at the hands of their rulers are a punishment which comes from above - and that which is inflicted through servants and subordinates is a punishment which comes from beneath. They are no stray accidents. In fact, they are a punishment of one’s deeds under a Divine law. Imām Sufyān

Ath-Thawrī said: When a sin gets to be committed by me, I see its effect on my servant, even on my horse I ride and the donkey I use to carry my things. I can feel the change in their temper because all of them start disobeying me. Maulānā Rūmi, in his famous Mathnawī, says that Allah Ta‘ālā, by putting you under the apparent punishment which causes pain to you through ill-treatment at the hands of your cruel rulers or faithless subordinates in this mortal world, actually wishes to turn your attention towards Himself, so that you get alerted and start trying to make your deeds good, and as a result of which, you may save yourself from the much greater punishment of the Hereafter.

To sum up, we can say that, according to the *Tafsīr* of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, the oppression of rulers is the punishment which comes from above, and the dishonesty, idling and treachery of subordinates is the punishment which comes from beneath, and the remedy for both is the same - that everyone should look back and examine what each one has done, leave paths of error, avoid being disobedient to Allah, then, nature will be commanded to take its desired course creating conditions which would remove the hardship. Otherwise, trying to remove them and correct the situation through material ways and means alone will be nothing but self-deception, an experience we have been having all the time.

The different explanations of the punishment from above and from beneath which you have heard just now are really no different from each other - because the word, عَذَابٌ (*adhāban*) meaning ‘punishment,’ which appears in this verse, in fact, embraces all these explanations. Punishments coming from the skies like the rocks, pebbles, blood, fire, flood, and the oppression of rulers, are all included under the punishment from above. As for the parting of the earth and the sinking of a people in it, or being drowned in water forcing out from the earth, or becoming a victim of problems at the hands of subordinates, all these are punishments from beneath.

There is a third kind of punishment mentioned in this verse, and that is: أَوْ يُلَبِّسَكُمُ شَيْعًا (or put you in confusion through divisions ...). It means that you may be split into parties confronting each other and it becomes a punishment from within. The word, يُلَبِّسَكُمُ (*yalbisakum*

translated as ‘put you in confusion’) used here comes from the root: لبس (*labasa*) which basically means to hide or cover up. It is in that sense it is used to refer to clothes which cover the human body. And for this reason, its derivation: التباس (*iltibās*) is used in the sense of doubt, where the meaning of what is said remains hidden, that is, it is not open and clear.

As for the word: شيع (*shiya’*), it is the plural form of: شيعَة (*shi‘ah*) which means to be a follower, adherent or partisan of someone. It appears in the Holy Qur’an: وَإِنَّ مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ لِبُرْهَانٍ that is, ‘following in the footsteps of Nūḥ عليه السلام is Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - 37:83.’ Therefore, in common usage, the word: شيعَة (*shi‘ah*) is used to denote a group which gets together for a particular purpose, and its members help each other in achieving that purpose. In the current idiom, it would mean a faction or party.

So, the verse could be translated in the sense that one kind of ‘*Adhāb*’ (punishment) is that a nation or community breaks up into factions and parties and starts confronting each other. Therefore, when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ addressed Muslims and told them:

لَا تَرْجِعُوا بَعْضِي كُفَّارًا يَضْرِبُ بَعْضُكُمْ رِقَابَ بَعْضٍ

Do not renege after me becoming like disbelievers striking at the necks of each other. (Deduced by Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Zayd ibn Aslam as in Mazhari)

Sayyidnā Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضى الله عنه says: Once we were going with the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. When we reached Masjid Banī Mu‘āwiyah, the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم went into the Masjid and offered two *raka‘ah* of Ṣalāh. We too offered two *raka‘ah*. After that, he became busy with *Du‘ā*, and kept praying for a fairly long time. After that, he said: ‘I asked my *Rabb* for three things: (1) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by drowning: Allah Ta‘ālā answered this prayer; (2) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by famine and hunger: This too was answered; (3) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by infighting: I was stopped from making this prayer.’ (Mazhari with reference to Baghawī)

Another *Ḥadīth* on the same subject has been reported from Sayy-

idnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه where one of the three prayers is that ‘may Allah not set an enemy upon my *Ummah* who destroys all of them.’ This prayer was answered. As for infighting and mutual confrontation, he was forbidden from making the prayer.

These narrations prove that, though the kind of punishments which visited earlier communities from above them and from beneath them and which destroyed all of them, will not visit the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - but, there is one ‘*Adhāb*’ (punishment) which will keep visiting this *Ummah* too during their life in the present world. That ‘*Adhāb*’ is their infighting and the mutual confrontation between their factions and parties. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has emphatically forbidden his *Ummah* from becoming divided in sects, factions and parties and from challenging and fighting each other among themselves. Actually, he has, on every possible occasion, tried to put the fear of Allah in every heart by warning that the Divine punishment, if it has to come upon Muslims within their life in this mortal world, it will come because of nothing else but their mutual confrontation and infighting.

This subject has been further clarified in a verse of Sūrah Hūd where it is said:

وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ إِلَّا مَن رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ (هود)

But they will continue in their differences, except those whom Allah has blessed with mercy - 11:118

In this light, it becomes all the more clear that those who differ with each other (without a valid Islamic legal justification) are either deprived of Divine mercy, or far-removed from it. Before we move on to analyse the subject, quoted below are two verses from Sūrah ‘Al-‘Imrān which would make the problem easier to understand:

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you, and be not divided - 3:103

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا

And do not be like those who became divided and fell into disputes ... - 3:105

### The Anatomy and Rationale of Differences

The essence of all *Āyāt* and *Riwāyāt* (Verses and *Hadīth* Narrations) presented here is that difference is ill-fated and blameworthy. If we were to ponder over the causes of the decline and dismemberment of Muslims materially and spiritually, we will see that the root of most troubles lies in this very mutual difference and discord we are talking about. Unfortunately, as a result of our own misdeeds, this ‘*Adhāb*’ has come to sit on our heads like an octopus. Otherwise, we were a people whose pivot of unity was one single *Kalimah* of *لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ* (There is no god worthy of worship but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). All men and women having faith in this *Kalimah*, anywhere on this earth, speaking any language, of any colour, of any race, any lineage, were brothers and sisters to each other. Mountains and rivers were no handicap in their unity. The difference of race, family, colour and language were no hurdles in their way. Their unity was tied with this *Kalimah* irrespective of their nationality. That they were Arabs or Egyptians or Syrians or Turks or Indian or Chinese did not matter. These divisions were simply for the sake of identity and introduction, and that was it, no more. The poet of neo-Islamic Renaissance, Muḥammad Iqbal summarized it by saying:

درویشِ خدامست نہ شرقی ہے نہ غربی  
گھر اس کا نہ دلیٰ نہ صفابان نہ سمر قند

The dervish of Allah cares not  
For he is neither of the East, nor of the West  
For him there is no home  
Neither Delhi, nor Isfahan, nor Samarqand ...

In our day, intrigues backed by constantly concerted efforts have succeeded in dividing them once again into racial, linguistic and regional nationalities. Worse came to happen when these very entities, hit by internal disruption and chaos, ended up splitting themselves into many more additional factions. The people whose hallmark was to forgive, forego and sacrifice even in the case of others when they would readily surrender their most just rights for the sake of avoiding confrontation now have many individuals within their fold who would not hesitate to sacrifice even the most precious relationship for the sake of the cheapest and the meanest of gains. This is the difference born out

of self-interest, wanton desires and fancies which is a bad omen for any community or nation, and certainly a cash punishment for them right here in the present world.

However, it is necessary to understand at this point the difference which has been declared in the Qur'an as Divine punishment, and deprivation from Divine mercy, is that particular difference which either appears in Principles and Beliefs or is because of self-interest, wanton desires and fancies. Not included here is the particular difference of opinion which was based on the Principles of *Ijtihad* carried out in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and it was under these Principles that the difference of opinion in subsidiary matters and *masā'il* has continued being there among the jurists (*Fuqahā'*) of the Muslim *Ummah* from the early period of *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) and *Tābi'īn*. (Successors to Companions). It should be borne in mind that in these subsidiary matters, the frame of reference under which such difference of opinion may show up is restricted to Qur'an, Sunnah and *Ijmā'* (consensus). Here, the intention of everyone is to obey and act in accordance with the injunctions of Qur'an and Sunnah. But, the difference which emerges here is that of *Ijtihad* and opinion in the deduction of solutions to subsidiary problems as interpreted from words left condensed or ambiguous in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Such difference has been called *Raḥmah* or mercy in *Ḥadīth*.

The following narration has been reported in Al-Jāmi' Al-Saghīr [with reference to Naṣr Maqdisī, Baihaqī & Imām al-Haramayn]: اِخْتِلَافُ أُمَّتِي رَحْمَةٌ (The difference of my *Ummah* is mercy). It has been made particular to the community of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم because any difference which arises among the '*Ulamā'*', who uphold nothing but the truth, and Muslim jurists who are unalienably God-fearing, shall always be governed by the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Then, this would be with an intention which is absolutely true and with an approach which is inevitably for the good pleasure of Allah. This difference will never be motivated by any self-interest or desire for recognition, office or money. Therefore, that difference will never become the cause of confrontations. Instead of that, as determined by 'Allama 'Abdur-Rauf al-Munāwī, the commentator of Al-Jāmi' Al-Saghīr, the different approaches (*Maslak*) of the jurists of Muslim community will have the

same status which was given to different religious law systems of the blessed prophets in past periods of time - in that they all were, despite being different, nothing but the very injunctions of Allah. Thus, the different approaches (*Maslak*) credited to the great Mujtahid Imāms of the Muslim *Ummah* shall be called, because of their being under the principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, nothing but the commandments and injunctions of Allah and *Rasūl*.

An example of such difference based on *Ijtihād* can be readily seen on the main streets of our cities where the streets are demarcated into various sections or lanes for the convenience of those who move on them. A section would be used by buses while another by cars and vans. Similarly, a section of the street may be reserved for cyclists and pedestrians. Though this division of one main street into several lanes is outwardly a form of difference but, since everyone is headed in one single direction and everyone moving through each lane will ultimately reach one desired destination. Therefore, this difference of routes or approaches, rather than being harmful, is functionally useful for all movers - a lot of space and mercy indeed.

This is the reason why leading Mujtahid Imāms and the Jurists of the Muslim Community agree that the *Maslak* or approach taken by any of them is not false, and it is not permissible for anyone to call those who follow it as being sinners. The essence of the difference in *Madhab* or approaches or schools of thought represented by Mujtahid Imāms and Jurists has a limited frame of reference. The approach taken by one Mujtahid happens to be weightier in his sight, but he himself would not call the approach of another Mujtahid as false. In fact, they pay due regard and respect to each other. A look into the mutual relationships of the jurists (*Fuqahā'*) among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn*. and the four leading Mujtahid Imāms and the events and happenings surrounding them are open testimony to the fact that, despite their differences in technical, intellectual and juristic approaches, they had excellent mutual working relationships, giving each other full respect and recognition. That they would be arrayed against each other in rancour, hostility and infighting was absolutely out of question in their case. The same spirit and *modus operandi* continued with those who later on came as followers of the main juristic schools - as far as



they remained adhering to sound knowledge and honest attitude, their mutual relationships remained based on cordiality and respect like their predecessors.

This is the difference we are talking about. This difference is mercy indeed, for people a source of myriad openings and conveniences and leaves, and certainly a reservoir of beneficial results. As far as subsidiary questions are concerned, the truth is that the difference of proponents in them is not harmful, if it remains within its proper bounds. In fact, it serves as an aid in enlarging and identifying different aspects of a question which makes it possible to arrive at a sound resolution of the problem. It goes without saying that in a meeting of honest minds, the absence of some difference of opinion about a question is just not conceivable. Something like this can happen among a set of people who cannot or do not understand the problem at all, or among pragmatic secular people who would not hesitate to agree to an opinion, even though against their conscience, just to accomodate some party, pressure group or interest lobby.

So, difference of opinion which is within its bounds, that is, not in the categorical imperatives of the Qur‘ān and Sunnah concerning articles of faith and decisive injunctions, and which is only in subsidiary questions requiring *Ijtihād*, and that too where the definitive texts of Qur‘ān and Sunnah are either silent or ambiguous, and again if the effort so made does not go to the outer limit of name calling, blame throwing and infighting, then, that difference of opinion will, instead of being harmful, be beneficial - a blessing and mercy. Think of this universe of our experience. Things differ in shape, form, colour, smell, property and functional benefits. There are countless living organisms. They differ, so do human beings, different temperaments, occupations, skills, ways of living - these differences are the charm of living which provides open avenues of countless benefits.

Many people who are not aware of this reality, would look down even upon the normal differences in the legal solution of problems (*fatāwa*) credited to great Jurists and true ‘*Ulamā*.’ They are heard complaining: When ‘*Ulamā*’ differ, where do we go? Frankly, this is a simple matter. Take the example of a sick person about whose condition physicians differ. Naturally everyone tries to find out a physician

who has the desired experience and technical expertise and he is the one entrusted with the charge of treating the patient. No one goes out speaking ill of other doctors in town. The same thing happens in legal cases. Lawyers may differ in their opinions. Naturally people entrust their case to a lawyer who is efficient and experienced in their estimation, and act on his advice. They do not run around maligning others in that profession. This principle should be operative here too. When the *Fatāwa* given by ‘*Ulamā*’ about a problem turn out to be different (reasons to be investigated in the parameters of the original inquiry), then, one should make his best efforts to locate an ‘*Ālim*’ who, in their judgement, is better than others in ‘*Ilm*’ (expertise in religious knowledge) and *Taqwā* (fear of Allah, fear of being responsible before Him) and follow the advice given by him. There is no need for them to waste their time in finding fault with other ‘*Ulamā*.’

In *I‘lām Al-Muwwaqqi‘īn*, ‘*Allāmah* Ḥāfiẓ ibn al-Qaiyyim has reported that the choice of an expert Mufti - and in case of a difference of opinion, the giving of preference to the *Fatwā* of an ‘*Ālim*’ who, in the opinion of the seeker, is the best of all in ‘*Ilm*’ and *Taqwā* - is the duty of every Muslim himself who has such a problem on hand. That he starts giving preference to one of the different *Fatāwa* of ‘*Ulamā*’ is certainly not his job. But, it is no one’s job but his own that he should act according to the *Fatwā* of anyone from among the Muftīs and ‘*Ālims*’ whom he considers the best in knowledge and honesty. After that, he should not go about denouncing other Muftīs and ‘*Ālims*’. Once a person has done what is required of him, he is totally free of blame in the sight of Allah. In case, the giver of *Fatwā* did make a mistake in the real sense, then, he himself will be responsible for it.

In short, not every difference is absolutely blameworthy, nor every agreement absolutely praiseworthy and desirable. If thieves, robbers and rebels were to join hands and form a union of their own, who would not take this union of theirs blameworthy and fatal for the society. Contrary to this, police action or public protest against such groups is considered praiseworthy and beneficial by all reasonable people.

This tells us that the problem does not lie in difference of opinion, nor does it lie in acting according to a particular opinion, instead, all

problems show up when others are suspected and slandered - which is an outcome of lack of knowledge and honesty and plenty of self-serving desires and fancies. When a nation or country stoops to that level, this merciful difference is changed into punishing difference. Of all the people, Muslims themselves split into parties, fight among themselves, even do the impossible by killing each other. Hurling insults on others is taken to be a defence of religious position, although, religion has nothing to do with such excess and aggression. In fact, this is the confrontation and fighting which has been sternly prohibited by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. In authentic *Āḥadīth*, it has been cited as the cause of peoples and nations going astray. (Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah)

In the second verse (66), after mentioning the anti-truth stand taken by the Quraysh of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, also from the same tribe, has been instructed that he should tell those people asking about the precise time when the promised punishment will come that he has not been appointed to do that for them. The truth is that for everything there is a point of time as determined in Divine knowledge. It will come at its own time, and they will see for themselves what happens when it does.

#### Verses 68 - 73

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى  
يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۗ وَإِمَّا يُنسِيتُكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ  
بَعْدَ الذِّكْرَىٰ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ  
مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَٰكِنْ ذِكْرَىٰ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾  
وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا ۖ وَلَهُمْ ۖ وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَوةُ الدُّنْيَا  
وَذَكَّرَ بِهِ أَنْ تُبَسَّلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيٌّ  
وَلَا شَفِيعٌ ۗ وَإِنْ تَعَدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَّا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ  
أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا ۗ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ ۖ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۖ بِمَا كَانُوا  
يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ ۖ قُلْ أَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا

وَرُودٌ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْنَا اللَّهَ كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ  
 فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانٌ ۚ لَهُ أَصْحَابٌ يَدْعُونَهُ إِلَىٰ الْهُدَىٰ انْتِنَا ۗ قُلْ  
 إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۗ وَأْمُرْنَا لِنُسَلِّمَ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَأَنْ  
 أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَهُوَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي  
 خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ كُن فَيَكُونُ ۗ قَوْلُهُ  
 الْحَقُّ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ ۗ عَلَيْهِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۗ  
 وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿٧٣﴾

And when you see those who indulge in our verses adversely, turn away from them until they get busy with some other discourse. If Satan makes you forget, then, after the recollection, do not sit with the unjust people. [68] And those who fear Allah bear no responsibility for anything they are accountable for, but only for advising them, so that they may fear Allah. [69]

And avoid those who have taken their faith as game and play and the worldly life has deceived them, and preach with it (the Qur'an), lest one should be detained for what he earned, having none to help besides Allah, nor to intercede, and if he offers every ransom, it will not be accepted from him. They are those who are detained for what they earned. For them there is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment, because they used to disbelieve. [70]

Say, "Should we call someone besides Allah, which can give neither benefit nor harm, and should we turn back on our heels after Allah has given us guidance, like the one whom the satans have taken away far into the wilderness leaving him bewildered; he has friends who call him to the right path (saying), "come to us." Say, "Allah's guidance is the guidance, and we have been ordered to submit to the Lord of the worlds, [71] and establish Ṣalāh, and fear Him. And He is the One before whom you are to be gathered. [72] And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in all rightness, and the day He says, "Be" and it comes to be. His word

is the truth and His is the kingdom on the day the Horn shall be blown. He is the knower of the absent and the present, and He is Wise, All-Aware. [73]

## Commentary

### Avoid Gatherings of False People

In the present verses, Muslims have been instructed that they should, as a matter of principle, abstain from being a part of the gatherings frequented by those who prefer to follow the false - because a sin is a sin, whether you do it yourself or watch others doing it. Details follow.

The word: *يَخْوِضُونَ* (translated here as ‘indulge’) in the first verse (68) is from: *خَوَضَ* (*khawḍ*) which basically means to enter into water and wade through it. Then, it also denotes entering into activities which are vain, absurd or futile. This word has been used in the Qur‘ān usually in this very sense. Verses such as: *رَكْنَا نَخْوِضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ* ‘we used to indulge (in vain discourse) with those indulging - 74:45’ and: *فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ* ‘playing with what they are indulged in - 6:91’ are some examples.

Therefore, the Qur‘ānic expression referring to: *خَوْضَ فِي الْآيَاتِ* has been translated by Maulānā Ashraf Alī Thānavī and Shaykh al-Hind, Maulānā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan in the sense of fault-finding and disputing, which means: ‘when you see those people meddling in the Āyāt of Allah just for fun and ridicule, or trying to find faults in them, turn away from them.’

The address in this verse is general, to everyone - which includes the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the members of his community as well. The truth of the matter is that the address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is there only to let Muslims at large hear it, otherwise he never participated in any such gatherings even during his childhood days. Therefore, he needed no prohibition.

Then, ‘turning away’ from the gatherings of false people could take many forms. For example, leave the gathering or get busy doing something else while being there without paying any attention to them. But, at the end of the verse, it was made clear that the first form is what is desirable, that is, one should not keep sitting in their gathering; one should rise and leave from there.

Said at the end of the verse was 'if Satan makes you forget', that is, if one went into their gathering unmindfully - whether while not remembering the prohibition of participating in such gatherings, or while not recalling that these people talk against the *Āyāt* of Allah and the *Rasūl* of Allah in their gatherings - then, in either situation, once it is remembered, one should leave that gathering immediately. To keep sitting there after having remembered is a sin. The same subject appears in another verse where, at the end, it has been said: If you kept sitting there, you will be like them (إِنَّكَ إِذَا مَنَّاهُمْ) (4:140).

In *Tafsīr* Kabir, Imām al-Rāzī has said that the real intent in this verse is to abstain from such sinful gatherings and their participants. The best course is to rise and depart from there. But, should leaving the gathering pose a danger to one's life, property or honour, it is permissible for common people to "turn away" in some other manner, for instance, they could make themselves busy with something else and pay no attention to them. But, the case is different with particular people who are followed in religious matters - for them, the only appropriate way is to rise and leave the gathering.

Going a little further in our understanding of the sentence: وَإِنَّمَا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ وَالشَّيْطَانُ (And if Satan makes you forget) mentioned above, let us consider its implications. If this is addressed to Muslims at large, it is clear that to forget is human - and if the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the question arises: If forgetfulness comes to affect a prophet and messenger of Allah as well, how can their teachings be trusted?

The answer is: It is possible that prophets عليهم السلام too forget something under particular circumstances where the divine wisdom decides to make it so happen to achieve a particular purpose, but they are immediately alerted by Allah Ta'ālā through Wahy which helps them not to let it last. Therefore, their teachings ultimately become free of any doubts of forgetfulness.

However, this sentence of the verse does tell us that should a person fall into an error inadvertently, that will stand forgiven. In a *Hadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has been said:

رُفِعَ عَنْ أُمَّتِي الْخَطَأُ وَالنِّسْيَانُ وَمَا اسْتَكْرَهُوا عَلَيْهِ

Removed from my *Ummah* is (the sin of) error and forgetting

and that which one has been compelled to do.

In Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said:

This verse tells that Muslims should abstain from every such gathering where things are being said against Allah Ta‘ālā, His *Rasūl* صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Shari‘ah of Islam and where it is not within one’s power and control to stop or have it stopped, or, at the least, be able to say what is true and right. However, participating in such a gathering with the intention to reform and to carry the message of truth to them does not matter.

As for the statement: *فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ* which prohibits sitting with unjust people after the recollection, Imām al-Jassās has deduced the ruling that participating in the gathering of such unjust, irreligious and big-mouthed people is an absolute sin, whether or not, at that time, they are engaged in talking about what would be considered impermissible - because people of such nature could be expected to start their ridiculous rantings all of a sudden. This rule is deduced from this verse on the basis that sitting in the company of unjust people has been prohibited in this verse in an absolute sense. It does not have the condition that they be busy with their act of injustice at that time too.

The same subject has been taken up in another verse of the Holy Qur‘ān more explicitly where it is said: *وَلَا تَرْكَبُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَمَا تَسْكُمُ النَّارُ* (And do not incline towards the wrong doers, lest the Fire should catch you ... 11:113).

When the verse cited above was revealed, the noble Companions submitted: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, if this absolute prohibition of going in their gatherings remained in force, we shall be deprived of offering Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf in *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* because these people keep sitting there all the time (before Hijrah and the Conquest of Makkah) doing nothing but fault-finding and ill-speaking. Thereupon, revealed was the next verse (69): *وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَكِنْ ذِكْرِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ* It means when people who observe restraint go to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* for their own rightful purpose, then, they are not responsible for the evil deeds of those wicked people present there. However, it does remain their duty that they should tell them what is right and true which may per-

haps help them take the right path.

In the third verse (70), nearly the same subject has been stressed upon in the following words: *وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لُعْبًا وَهَلْوًا* (And avoid those who have taken their faith as game and play ...). The word: *ذر* (*dhar*) here is a derivation from: *وذر* (*wadhara*) which means being displeased with something and leaving it. Thus, the verse can be taken either in the sense of leaving people who have turned the true religion, that is, Islam which has been sent for them, into a plaything and a laughing stock; or in the sense that they have left their real faith and taken to fun and play as their very own religion and purpose of life. The outcome of both meanings is nearly the same.

After that, it was said: *وَعَرَّضْنَاهُمُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا* that is, the transitory life of the present world has deceived them. This is a true diagnosis of their real problem. They are so disobedient and wicked because they are bewitched by the glamour of their mortal life totally forgetting that they have another state of life ahead of them. If they had believed in the *‘Ākhirah* (Hereafter) and *Qiyāmah* (The Last Day), they would have never acted so recklessly.

In this verse, the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* and Muslims at large have been given two orders that they should not only avoid the people identified, but that they should also act positively and continue preaching through the Qur‘ān and keep putting the fear of Allah’s punishment in their hearts.

The detail of this punishment was pointed out at the end of the verse by saying that, should they continue doing what they were doing, they are bound to fall a victim to their own evil conduct. The word used at this place is: *فِي سُلْجَمٍ* which means to be detained or be entrapped.

Since man in this world is accustomed to rely on three kinds of sources to escape the punishment of his own error or injustice inflicted on someone. When convenient, he would use the power and influence of his party or group to stay safe against the consequences of his injustice. Then, should he become helpless, he would use recommendations from the influential people. When that too does not work, he would try to secure his freedom from punishment by spending money.

Allah Ta‘ālā says in this verse that His criminal cannot be saved



from punishment by any friend or relative, nor can an intercession by anyone succeed without the permission of Allah, nor can wealth of any kind be accepted - even if the criminal were to possess the wealth of the whole world and wished to give it all in exchange for his freedom from punishment, even then this *fidyah* will not be accepted from him.

Finally, at the close of the verse, it was said: *أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ* *أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ* *أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ* that is, these are the people who have been detained in the punishment of their evil deeds. They will have boiling water to drink in the *Jahannam* about which it has been said in another verse that it will shatter their entrails apart (47:15) and that there will be painful punishments other than that of the boiling water in return for their disbelief and denial.

This verse also tells us that the very company of people who are heedless to the '*Ākhirah*' and are content with their life in the mortal world is fatal for everyone. Its ultimate consequence is that whoever sits in their company shall be subject to the same punishment in which they have been caught up.

The essential objective in these three verses (68-70) is to save Muslims from evil environment and bad company which can be as deadly as poison. Many clear, definite and conclusive statements (*Nuṣūṣ*) of the Qur‘ān and Ḥadīth as well as repeated observation and experience prove that the root of all evils and crimes in which human beings get involved is the evil society and environment in which they grow up. Once snared into it, one slides into evils against personal grain and conscience. Then, comes the stage when, once habituated, the sense of evil dies away - reaching the limit when one starts taking evil as good and good as evil. In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: When a person gets involved in a sin for the first time, there appears a dot on his heart. This is like a black dot on a white dress which everyone dislikes and gets disturbed with. So, this person too feels the distaste in his heart. But when he, after having done the first one, goes on doing the second and the third sin - and does not repent from the past sin - black dots, one after the other, keep appearing on the heart, so much so that the radiant tablet of the heart turns jet black. The outcome is that this person is deprived of the very ability to distinguish between good and bad. The Holy Qur‘ān identifies it

with the word: “*ra’n*” (rust, stain) when it says: *كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا* (83:14), that is, there is rust on their hearts because of their evil deeds (which has taken away their ability to receive good).

When you come to think of it, wrong environment and bad company really hurt all human beings. They push people into the abyss. May Allah keep all of us protected from them. Therefore, everyone who is responsible for raising children must do their best to keep children safe from such society and environment.

As for the next three verses (71-73), they too deal with the refutation of *Shirk* (the attribution of partners to Allah) and the affirmation of *Tauhid* (the Oneness of Allah) and *’Akhira* (the Hereafter, the life to come) as fairly evident from the translation itself.

#### Verses 74 - 81

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ أَرِئكَ  
 وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ  
 السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَنَّ  
 عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّيَ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَأَحِبُّ  
 الْأَفْلِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّيَ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ  
 قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧٧﴾  
 فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّيَ هَذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ  
 قَالَ يَقَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ  
 لِلدِّينِ فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ  
 ﴿٧٩﴾ وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ ۗ وَلَا  
 أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَن يُشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا ۗ وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ  
 شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا  
 تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا ۗ

فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

And (remember) when Ibrāhīm said to his father, Āzar: “Do you (really) take idols as gods? I am afraid you and your people are in open error.” [74] And thus We showed Ibrāhīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, so that he may be firm in belief. [75]

So, when the night enveloped him, he saw a star. He said, “This is my Lord.” But, when it vanished, he said, “I do not like those who vanish.” [76] Later, when he saw the moon rising, he said, “This is my Lord.” But, when it vanished, he said, “If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those gone astray.” [77] Thereafter, when he saw the sun rising, he said, “This is my Lord. This is greater.” Again, when it vanished, he said, “O my people, I am free of whatever you associate with Allah. [78] I have, indeed, turned my face straight towards the One who created the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of those who associate partners with Allah.” [79]

And his people argued with him. He said, “Do you argue with me about Allah while He has already led me to the right path, and I do not fear what you associate with Him unless, of course, something is willed by my Lord? My Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. Would you, then, take no lesson? [80] And how can I fear what you associate with Him, while you do not fear that you have associated with Allah something for which He has sent down no authority to you? Now, which of the two parties has more right to be in peace? (Tell me) if you know.” [81]

### Commentary

Previous verses contained a description of the call given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in which he addressed the disbelievers of Arabia and appealed to them that they should forsake the worship of idols and believe in a single object of worship: Allah.

The present verses support this call of truth in a particular way which could be naturally acceptable to the people of Arabia who have Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as their patriarch and the whole Arabia

stood united in paying homage to him almost always. These verses refer to the debate against the worship of idols and stars led by him before his people and to whom he had then given a lesson as to what a true belief in the Oneness of Allah should be.

The first verse (74) opens with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام telling his father, ‘Āzar that he had taken idols made with his own hands as his object of worship, and that he saw him and his entire people in manifest error.

It is commonly held that ‘Āzar is the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm’s father while most historians give his name as *Tarakh* and identify ‘Āzar as his title. Imām al-Rāzī and a group of early scholars hold that *Tarakh* was the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm’s father and ‘Āzar was the name of his uncle. After becoming a minister of Nimrūd, his uncle, ‘Āzar had become a polytheist. Since calling an uncle as father is common in Arab usage, ‘Āzar has been named here as Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm’s father. In Sharh al-Mawāhib, Zarqānī has reported several proofs to this effect.

### Reform Begins at Home

‘Āzar, whether a father or uncle of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, was a respectable elder of the family. Thus, it was from his home that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm gave the first call to truth - as was commanded the Holy Prophet ﷺ too: وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ (26:214) that is, warn your near relatives (of the Divine punishment). It was in obedience to this command that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had first gathered his own family to hear him when he stood at the hill of *Safā* to deliver his call of truth.

According to *Tafsīr* Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, from here we also learn that inviting a respected elder of the family, who may not be on the right path of faith, to the right path is not contrary to the norms of reverence. In fact, it is a matter of wishing well for him. In addition to that, this also tells us that starting the work of *da‘wah*, the mission of inviting people to the true faith and the seeking of reforms that lead to it, from one’s home, family and immediate circle, is a *Sunnah* (way) of the prophets عليهم السلام .

### Two-Nation Theory: Believers are One People - Disbelievers, another.

It will be noted that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has elected not to

identify his family and his people with himself in this verse when he said to his father that ‘his’ people were in error. This indicates the great sacrifice Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm offered in the way of Allah by cutting off his bonds with his disbelieving brotherhood. Thus, by his deed, he demonstrated that Muslim nationality is founded through the bonds of Islam. When nationalities based on concepts of race or homeland clash against it, all these deserve to be forsaken.

By mentioning this event relating to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the Holy Qur‘ān has asked all communities to come after him that they too should follow in his footsteps. It was said: *فَدَكَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَآءُؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ* It means: Definitely good and worthy of being emulated and followed by the Muslim community is the way and conduct of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and of those with him who frankly told their lineal, racial and geographical brotherhood that they were wary of them and their false objects of worship and that the wall of discord between them shall remain standing until such time that they do become believers and submit to none but Allah.

This tells us that the two-nation theory which brought Pakistan into existence - was first proclaimed by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and other communities, followed this guidance and moved ahead. Among Muslims, Islam as the identity of their nationhood became well-recognized. During his journey undertaken to perform his Last Hajj, the Holy Prophet ﷺ met a caravan on the way. He asked them: ‘Which nationality do you come from?’ They replied: ‘نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مُسْلِمُونَ’ (al-Bukhari) (We are [a] nation [of] Muslims). Here, in accordance with the early practice in Arabia, they did not name a tribe or a lineally identified family, instead, called themselves: ‘*muslimūn*’ (Muslims) - and by doing so, they declared what was their real nationality, a nationality which will hold good in all time frames right to the end of time well through the trials of the *Ākhirah*. At this particular place when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام addressed his father, he proclaimed his distaste for the doings of ‘his’ people - attributing the people he came from to his father - but, at the place where he had to proclaim his principled disassociation from the same people, he addressed them as his, as appears in the next verse: *يَقُولُ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَشْرِكُونَ* (O my people, I am free of what you associate with Al-

lah). The hint given here is: ‘Though, you are my people in terms of race and homeland, but your deeds of disbelief and polytheism have compelled me to cut off my relations with your brotherhood.’

The brotherhood of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and his father were involved in a two-fold *Shirk*: They worshipped idols as well as stars. So, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام debated both issues with his father and with his people.

First, it was idol worship. He said that it was error, and straying. Then, in the next verses, he pointed out to stars as unworthy of worship. And a little earlier in verse 75, it is in the form of an introduction that Allah Ta‘ālā mentions a particular elegance and insight of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام by saying: *وَكَذَلِكَ بَرَأْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلِيَكُوْنُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ* that is, ‘We made Ibrāhīm عليه السلام see what We have created in the heavens and the earth in a way which would unravel the reality of all these created objects manifestly so that he may become firm in his belief.’ What came to pass after that has taken the shape of a wondrous dialogue that appears in later verses (which shows a certain quality even in the translated form of the meanings of the totally untranslatable beauty, diction and elan of the original) and it would be useful to dwell upon the manner in which it emerges stage by stage.

### Using Wisdom and Strategy in *Tabligh* and *Da‘wah* is the Way of Prophets

Let us begin with verse 76 which opens with the words: *فَلَمَّا جَاءَ عَمْرِيْنَ الْبَلُّ* فَلَمَّا جَاءَ عَمْرِيْنَ الْبَلُّ So, when the night enveloped him, he saw a star. Then, beaming at his people, he said: This is my Lord. The sense in which he said it was: Is it not, as you think and believe, my Lord and your Lord, the *Rabb* of both of us who nurtures, nourishes and sustains us? In a little while you will find out how real that is. Then, after some time, the star vanished. This gave Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm a good occasion to drive his argument home against his disbelieving people. He said: *لَا أُحِبُّ الْاٰفِلِيْنَ* (I do not like those who vanish). The word: *أَفِلِيْنَ* (‘*āfulīn*’) is from: *أَفَلَ* (‘*āfulīn*’) which means to set.

The sense is that things which set or vanish do not deserve being held dear - and when something is to be given the status of an object of worship has to be, quite obviously, most worthy of love and reverence. Maulanā Rūmī, in one of his couplets, has directly referred to this

event when he said (in Persian, with its stylized translation) :

خليل آسادر ملك يقين زن

نوائے لا أحبُّ الّا فلین زن

Like Khalīl [Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh ...]

Enter

The Domain of Belief

By proclaiming

The Password:

I do not like the vanishing!

After that, some other night, with a glowing moon in sight, he again beamed his dialogue at his people following the earlier method, and said: (according to your view) this is my Lord but its reality you will find out after a little while. So, when the moon vanished, he said: If my Rabb had not been guiding me all along, I would have been enlisted among the stray like you, and it would have been the moon itself I might have taken as my Lord and my object of worship. But, the alternating conditions of its rising and setting brought me to the chastening conclusion that this star too is not worthy of worship.

Also hinted in this verse is that the *Rabb* or Lord of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is a totally different entity from Whom guidance keeps coming to him.

Then, the day he saw the sun rising, he again said to his people as he had done earlier: This (according to your view) is my *Rabb*. And this is the biggest of all. But, its reality you will soon find out. So, when came the time for the sun to set, set it did. Driven home was his final argument against the ideas of his people. The reality had become all too obvious. So, he said: *يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا اِنِّىْٓ اِنْتَهٰى بَرِئَْتِيْۤا* (O my people, I am free of whatever you associate with Allah).

In conclusion, he made it clear before them that his *Rabb* (the Lord of life who nurtures, cherishes and sustains it) and their *Rabb* can never be any of these created heavenly bodies which are not free of dependence on something else for their existence, and are surrounded by constant and ongoing changes of rising and setting. Instead of them, his Lord and their Lord was no other than the One who has created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. Therefore, he declared that he had changed his orientation away from their self-

sculpted idols and away from the stars of their fancy which changed and alternated under creational compulsion, and it was to the total exclusion of all these, that he had turned to Allah alone, the One God who has no partners and associates with Him - (and when that was settled, he was different) so, he made it frank and clear that he was not a *Mushrik* (disbeliever or polytheist) like them. (Indeed, a line of demarcation drawn for ever!)

In this debate, it is significant that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm has shown characteristic prophetic wisdom and elegance of approach when he does not make a frontal assault on the false notions of star-worship entertained by his people as being false or erroneous. He has, rather, chosen a very telling style of presentation which by itself would help any rational human being to absorb the point being made and be able to recognize reality at the end. Of course, when the case was that of idol-worship, his method was different - there, he had taken a hard line right from the start, and had told his father point-blank that he and his people had gone astray. The reason was that idol-worship was all too obvious an error, contrary to star-worship the error of which was not so obvious and pronounced.

Noteworthy here is the outcome of the argument against star-worship presented by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام before his people. He said that (a) things which are subject to change, (b) things which keep alternating in their conditions, and (c) things which in their movements are subservient to some other power can never become deserving of being taken as anyone's *Rabb* or Lord. In this argument, it was possible to seek help from all other conditions of the stars, such as their rising and their intermediary stage before their setting, when it could have been said that they were not independent in their movements and were moving in a pre-specified orbit under the command of someone else. But, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, from out of all these states and conditions, chose the setting of these stars as the main thrust of his argument - because their setting, in a way, spells out their decline in the sight of common people. The typical argument presented by prophets, may peace be upon them all, is what would go on to influence the minds of common people. They do not pursue philosophical truisms, instead, they address people at the level of common



comprehension. Therefore, it was to prove the helplessness and ineffectiveness of stars that the phenomenon of their setting was presented. Otherwise, the rising of the stars might have also been used to prove that they were helpless and powerless - and it would have also been possible to get hold of an argument from changes that come upon them before they finally set.

### Some Instructions for Preachers of Islam

This debating style of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام provides some important points of guidance for Muslim scholars and *Da'wah* workers:

1. In matters relating to carrying the call of truth to people (*Tablīgh*) and seeking reform among them (*Islāh*), being universally rigid or universally lenient is not appropriate. The correct approach is to understand that each of these has an occasion and a limit. For example, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm has used strong words when it comes to idol-worship, because its error is within common sight. But, he has not used such strong words in the case of star-worship where he has used a particular method to clarify its reality in the minds of his people - because the matter of stars and planets being helpless and powerless was not so readily obvious as was that of self-carved idols. This tells us that should common people be involved in an error of judgement or conduct, which they do not realize as such, then, the *‘Ālim* (religious scholar) or *Muballigh* (religious preacher) would do well to avoid taking a hard line, rigid or excessive or dogmatic, and try to find a better way to remove their doubts.

2. The second guidance concerns the manner in which truth has to be presented. The example is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not address his people directly asking them to do what had to be done. Rather than say something in the mode of an order, he simply told them about how he felt in this matter. He said that he could not declare things which were helplessly involved in a cycle of rising and setting as objects of worship. For this reason, he told them, he had turned to the Being that is the creator, nurturer and caretaker of all these things. Of course, the purpose was to bring them round to do the same. But, in his wise way, he abstained from a direct address lest they become totally uncompromising by opposing the suggestion just for the sake of opposition. This tells us that the job of a reformer and

preacher is not to go ahead and tell what is true in just about any way. Instead of doing something like that, he is bound to say it in a manner which would produce the desired effect on his listeners.

### Verses 82 - 89

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ  
 مُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ نَرْفَعُ  
 دَرَجَاتٍ مَنِ نَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ  
 إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۗ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۗ وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ  
 ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ۗ  
 وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَ  
 الْيَسَاءَ ۗ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ  
 وَلُوطًا ۗ وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَمِنَ الْبَاطِلِ  
 وَذُرِّيَّتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ  
 ﴿٨٧﴾ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۗ وَلَوْ  
 أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ  
 آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۗ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ  
 وَكَلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لِّيُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا بِكُفْرِنَ ﴿٨٩﴾

Those who have believed and have not mixed their faith with injustice; it is they who deserve peace and it is they who are on the right path. [82]

And that is the proof from Us We gave to Ibrahim against his people. We raise in ranks whom We will. Surely, your Lord is Wise, Knowing. [83]

And We blessed Ishāq\* and Ya‘qūb. To each We gave guidance. And earlier, We gave guidance to Nūḥ and, of

\*. Biblical names in the order as they appear in this paragraph containing Verses 84-86: Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zechariah, John, Jesus, Elias, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot.

his progeny, to Dāwūd and Sulaymān and Ayyūb and Yūsuf and Mūsā and Harūn - and this is how We reward the good in deed [84] - and to Zakariyya and Yaḥyā and ‘Īsā and Ilyas - each one of them was of the righteous [85] - and to Ismā‘īl and Yasa‘ and Yūnus and Lūṭ, and all of them We made to excel over the worlds. [86] And We gave guidance to many among their fathers and their children and their brothers, and We chose them and led them on to the straight path. [87]

That is Allah’s guidance. He guides with it whom He wills from His slaves. And had they associated partners with Him, all they did would have been nullified for them. [88]

They are those whom We have given the Book and wisdom and prophethood. So, if these people disbelieve it, then, We have deputed for it a people who do not disbelieve in it. [89]

### Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was the debate Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had held with his father, ‘Āzar, and with his entire Nimrudic people. There, after having conclusively refuted their worship of idols and stars, he had addressed his people by telling them in effect: You threaten me that your idols will destroy me if I refuse to accept their authority, although these idols do not have the power to do so, nor have I done anything as a result of which I may be hit by some hardship. In fact, it is you who should be trembling in fear for you have committed a crime as terrible as equating with Him the creations of Allah, rather the objects made and prepared by His creation even giving them a share in His divinity. Then, the fact that Allah Ta‘ālā is All-Knowing, All-Aware and All-Powerful is not hidden from any sensible person. This calls for some thinking on your part. So, think and say who deserves to be in peace and who it is who should be fearing?

In the first (82) of the present verses, it was said that only those who believe in Allah and then do not go on to mix up their faith with injustice shall be the people who can hope to be safe against punishment. It appears in *Hadīth*, when this verse was revealed, the noble *Sahābah* were frightened. They said: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, who among us has not been unjust to himself by committing one or the other sin?

Now, in this verse, the only condition of remaining safe from punishment is that one should have done no injustice to himself while in the state of *Īmān*. If so, how can we ever achieve salvation? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: You have not understood the correct meaning of the verse. Here, ‘*Zulm*’ (injustice) means ‘*Shirk*’ (ascribing of partners to Allah) as said in another verse: إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (Joining others in the worship of Allah is a great injustice - 31:13). Therefore, the sense of the verse is that one, who enters (the bliss of) *Īmān* and then does not associate anyone with the Being and the Attributes of Allah Ta‘ālā, shall remain safe from punishment, and considered well-guided.

In brief, those who worship idols, rocks, trees, rivers and stars do so because they, out of bland simplicity, take them to be the holders and wielders of power. So, they are scared of the idea of forsaking their worship lest these objects were to hurt them in some way. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام gave such people a smart key to their problem when he asked them to fear Almighty Allah who knew all they do and had power over whatever good or bad reaches them - and not commit the folly of fearing things which have neither knowledge nor power. This fear is absolutely unreasonable. One must fear Allah alone - and whoever believes in it is out of all danger.

Said in this verse is: وَلَمْ يَلْمِزُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ (And those who have not mixed their faith with injustice). Here, ‘*Zulm*’ as explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, means *Shirk* (ascribing partners in the divinity of Allah) - not sin in an ordinary sense. But, by bringing in: بظلم (*bi zulmin*) as indefinite noun (*Nakirah*), a device supported by the rules of the Arabic grammar, the sense was made general which includes all kinds of *Shirk*. As for the word: لَمْ يَلْمِزُوا (lam yalbisu), it has been derived from: لبس (*labasa*) which means to wear, cover or mix. Thus, the verse comes to mean that a person who mixes some sort of *Shirk* in his or her *Īmān*, that is, one who, despite believing in Allah Ta‘ālā along with all His attributes of perfection, takes non-Allah too as bearing some of those attributes, shall be considered excluded from the guarantee of peace and faith given here.

We also come to know from this verse that *Shirk* is not restricted to becoming a *Mushrik* or idolater. In fact, also *Mushrik* is a person who

does not worship idols in the customary sense, but recites the *Kalimah* of Islam, yet takes some angel or messenger or *waliy* or 'saint' of Allah as partners or sharers in some exclusive attributes of Allah. This verse carries a stern warning for those who take the *Auliā'* of Allah (The Men of Allah) and their *Mazārs* (resting places, tombs) as capable of answering their prayers and granting their needs, and go as far as believing practically as if the Divine powers have been delegated to them. Refuge with Allah!

In the second verse (83), Allah Ta'ālā has said that the triumph of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm in his debate against his people and in which he had silenced them was a blessing of Allah alone for He gave him a sound theory to propound and glowing arguments to employ. Let no one wax proud about his or her intelligence and understanding or art of discourse and power of oration as self-sufficient. Nothing crosses the barrier of possibility without the support and help of Allah Ta'ālā. Bland human reason is not enough to comprehend realities. This is a matter of common observation in every age. Philosophers of great standing go astray while many among the illiterate get a firm hold on correct belief and right thinking. Maulanā Rūmī was on the beam when he said:

یہ عنایاتِ حق و خاصانِ حق  
گر ملک باشد سیہ بستش ورق

Without the graces of The True One and those close to Him  
Dark shall be the record of deeds, even if one be an angel.

By saying: *نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ نَّفْسِهِ* (We raise in ranks whom We will) towards the end of the verse (83), the hint given is that the station of special reverence received by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in this world which would last through generations to come until the Last Day, a homage universally paid by Jews, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, was no feat of personal acquisition or recognition, instead of which, this was nothing but the grace and reward from Allah.

In the six verses (84-89) appearing after that, there is a list of seventeen blessed prophets, some of whom are the forefathers of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام while most are his progeny, with some being his brothers or nephews. On the one hand, described in these verses is their being Divinely guided, righteous in conduct and firm on the straight

path, along with the fact that Allah Ta‘ālā has chosen and blessed them to serve His religion. On the other hand, it has been stressed that, in return for the sacrifice of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who had disassociated himself from his father, community and country in the way of Allah, was it not that, much before the reward of eternal bliss in the Hereafter, Allah Ta‘ālā bestowed on him right here in this world too a community better than his own, a country better than his own - and blessed him with the supreme distinction that all prophets and messengers sent into the world after him upto the end of time were from among his progeny? A branch that originated from Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام had prophets who appeared among the Banī Isrā‘īl. The other branch which originated from Sayyidnā Ismā‘īl عليه السلام saw the coming of the foremost and the Last among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم from among them. They all were the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. This phenomena also tells us that, though honour and salvation or disgrace and punishment really depend on one’s personal deeds, but having a prophet or man of Allah (*waliy*) among forefathers, or having observing ‘*Ālims* of *Dīn* and men and women of righteous conduct among children, is also a great blessing as this too brings its benefits.

Out of these seventeen prophets عليهم السلام identified in the cited verses, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is the patriarch of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The rest have been called their progeny: *وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ* (and, of his progeny, to Dāwūd and Sulaymān ...). This poses two difficulties. The first could be about Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام who, because of his father-less birth, is a progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام from the daughter’s side, that is, not a paternal grandson, instead, is a grandson from the maternal side.

If so, how would calling him his progeny would be correct? Most learned Muslim scholars and jurists have answered it by saying that progeny is inclusive of both paternal and maternal grandsons. It is from here that they prove that Sayyidnā Hasan and Sayyidnā Husain رضی الله عنهما stand included under the progeny of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The second difficulty posed here relates to Sayyidnā Luṭ عليه السلام for he is not from among his children, but is a nephew. The answer is clear. In customary usage, referring to an uncle as father and to a

nephew as son is very common.

By mentioning the blessings of Allah on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in these verses, two things have been made very clear. Firstly, there is the law for anyone who sacrifices whatever he holds dear in the way of Allah, on him or her Allah bestows right here in this mortal world what is better than what he or she has surrendered in the way of Allah. Secondly, the purpose is to make the disbelievers of Makkah hear this background of things in their situation so that they may be guided right. This amounts to telling them: You do not listen to what Our prophet, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم is telling you. If that is so, consider these you too rever as great. So, Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and his whole progeny have all been saying the same thing - that Allah is the only object worthy of worship. Associating anyone else with Him in *'Ibādah*, or suggesting that someone else is a sharer in His exclusive attributes is what disbelief and straying is. This proves that they are, even in terms of what they themselves accept as established truth, subject to censure.

The subject continues through the eighth verse (89) at the end of which it has been said to comfort the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَإِنْ : فَإِنْ : يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ (So, if these people disbelieve it, then, We have deputed for it a people who do not disbelieve in it). In other words, it means: If some of your addressees do not listen to you and are, despite having been told about the teachings of all past prophets, bent upon nothing short of denial, then, you do not have to worry - because We have appointed a great people who would say yes to your call, follow your word and make the mission their own, and who would never stoop to the level of disbelief and denial.

Included here are all *Muhājirīn* and *Anṣār* present during the blessed age of the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and also all Muslims who keep coming upto the end of time until comes the *Qiyāmah*. And this verse is a fond asset for all such people, as Allah Ta'ālā has named them on an occasion which calls for praise by Him:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَاحْشُرْنَا فِي زُمْرَتِهِمْ

O Allah, make us one of them and raise us in their company.

## Verses 90 - 94

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهِدْيِهِمُ اقْتَدِهْ ۗ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ  
 أَجْرًا ۗ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ  
 قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى بَشَرٍ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ قُلْ مَنْ أَنْزَلَ  
 الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَى نُورًا وَهُدًى لِلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُونَهُ  
 قَرَاطِيسَ يُبَدُّونَهَا وَيُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا ۗ وَعَلَّمْتُمْ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ  
 وَلَا آبَاؤُكُمْ ۗ قُلْ اللَّهُ ۗ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾  
 وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ  
 الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ۗ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَهُمْ  
 عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَىٰ  
 اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ قَالَ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَمَنْ قَالَ  
 سَأُنزِلُ مِثْلَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ  
 الْمَوْتِ وَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَاسِطُوٓآءُ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۖ أَخْرِجُوا أَنفُسَكُمُ ۗ الْيَوْمَ  
 تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ  
 وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا فُرَادَىٰ كَمَا  
 خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَتَرَكْتُمْ مَا خَوَّلْنَاكُمْ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِكُمْ وَمَا نَرَىٰ  
 مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَاءَ كُمْ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ فِيكُمْ شُرَكَؤُا ۗ لَقَدْ  
 تَقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

Those are the people Allah has guided. So, it is their guidance that you shall follow. Say, "I ask you no reward for it. It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds." [90]

And they did not hold Allah in due esteem when they said, "Allah has not sent down anything on a human being." Say, "Who has sent down the Book brought by



Mūsā as a light and a guidance for people, which you kept in sheets you displayed, and you concealed a lot? You were taught what you did not know - neither you nor your fathers?" Say, "Allah." Then leave them playing with what they are indulged in. [91]

And this is a blessed book We have sent down, confirming what has been before it, so that you may warn the town which is the mother of all towns, and those around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and of their prayers, they take due care. [92]

And who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah or says, "Revelation has been sent to me" whereas no revelation has been sent to him, and the one who says, "I would reveal just as Allah has revealed." And if you could witness when the unjust are in the throes of death, and the angels stretch their hands (and say,) "Out with your souls. Today, you shall have your punishment, a punishment of humiliation, because you have been saying about Allah what is not true, and rejecting His verses arrogantly." [93]

And you have come to Us all alone just as We had created you at first, and you have left behind what We had bestowed on you, and We do not see your intercessors with you - those whom you claimed to be (Our) partners in (managing) your matters. In fact, all ties between you are severed and all that you claimed is lost to you. [94]

### Commentary

It will be recalled that mentioned in previous verses were great rewards and ranks bestowed on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Through these, the purpose was to show to the whole progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام generally and to the people of Makkah and Arabia particularly, in a practically demonstrated form, that a person who takes total obedience to Allah Ta‘ālā as the sole purpose of his or her life and sacrifices everything held dear in the way of Allah - as was done by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah, may Allah bless him - then, in order are the best of returns for that person. He left his father and mother, his people and country, all for the sake of Allah. Then, it was to offer his supreme services to found and raise the foundations of the House of

Allah, the venerated Baytullah, that he abandoned the greeneries of the country of Syria and travelled all the way to the deserts of Makkah. When ordered to leave his wife and infant son in the wilderness, he obeyed instantly. When commanded to sacrifice his first-born and very dear son, he demonstrated his readiness to obey it all the way to the ultimate limits of his choice and volition. For those obedient in that class and degree, the real reward shall come only after *Qiyāmah*, and in *Jannah* alone. But, Allah Ta'ālā blesses such people right here in this world too with ranks and riches which would put all ranks and riches of the entire world to shame.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام left his people for the sake of Allah - in return, he became the patriarch of prophets, most of whom were from among his progeny. He left his country of Syria and Iraq - in return, he was blessed with Baytullah (the House of Allah), al-Balad al-Amīn (the City of Trust) and Umm al-Qurā (the Mother of Cities) that is, Makkah. His own people tried to disgrace him - in return, he was made the supreme leader of generations to come right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* in the present world where nations and religions despite their major mutual differences have all along remained united on paying homage to the reverence of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

It will also be recalled that in those verses seventeen prophets were mentioned most of whom are either children or progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It was also stated there that they were persons of great status whom Allah had chosen to convey His message to all human beings and that it was He who had shown them the straight path.

### **Explanatory Notes on the Present Verses**

Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the first verse (90) the people of Makkah have been sounded that the forefathers of a people cannot be taken as objects of emulation or role-models deserving of being followed to the letter in all their words and deeds, as was generally believed by the people of Arabia, and by the people of Makkah particularly. Instead, before going ahead and starting to follow someone, it is necessary to find out whether or not the person, or people, being followed, is himself on the path of true guidance. Therefore, after enu-

merating a brief list of the blessed prophets, it was said: **أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ** (Those are the people Allah has guided). After that, it was said: **فَهُدَاهُمْ** (So, it is their guidance that you shall follow).

Thus, the guidance given in this verse is bi-polar. The first element is addressed to the people of Arabia, and to the whole Muslim *Ummah* by implication, that is, they should forsake the superstition of following forefathers and take to following prophets guided by Allah Ta‘ālā. The second element of guidance is for the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, that is, he too should act in the way the past prophets have acted.

Noteworthy here is the fact that partial or subsidiary differences have been there in the laws of earlier prophets, may peace be upon them. Then, revealed for the Muslim peoples themselves, there have been many injunctions different from them. What, then, would be the meaning of asking the Holy Prophet ﷺ to follow the way of the past prophets and act in accordance with it? Keeping in view other Qur’anic verses and narrations of *Hadīth*, the answer is that the command here does not apply to the following of the way of past prophets in all partial and subsidiary aspects of injunctions. In fact, the purpose is to adhere to the basic principles of religion which include *Tauhid* (Oneness of Allah) *Risālah* (Prophethood) and *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) as has been their way. They never changed in the law of any prophet. From Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the Last of the Prophets ﷺ, all prophets, عليهم السلام, have been adhering to one Belief and one Way. As for subsidiary injunctions which remained unchanged, the *modus operandi* has been common. However, when a new injunction was given due to exigency of time or dictate of wisdom, it was acted upon as required.

This is the reason why it was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would - until such time that he received particular guidance through revelation - act in accordance with the way of past prophets عليهم السلام (Mazharī & others).

After that, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been specially commanded to proclaim - a common practice of all past prophets - in the words which follow: **قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ** (Say: “I ask you no reward for it. It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds). In other words, it means: I am not asking you to pay for the good counsel I am offering to help you better your life. I need no fees or wages or re-

wards. If you accept it, I gain nothing. If you do not accept it, I lose nothing. This is only a message, a message for people all over, a message of good counsel, good will. Not accepting any return for teaching and preaching has been the common legacy of all prophets عليهم السلام. This is a powerful factor which goes on to make *Tabligh* (conveying the message of religion to others) effective.

The second verse (91) has been revealed in answer to those who had the audacity to say that Allah Ta'ālā has just not revealed any book to any human being. According to them, this whole proposition of books and messengers was all wrong.

If, those who said that are the idolaters of Makkah, as mentioned by Ibn Kathīr, then, the matter is obvious, for they did not believe in any book and prophet. And if they were Jews, as held by other commentators - and the contextual elements of the verse obviously support this view - then, their saying so was an outcome of their anger and irritation, something contrary to the dictates of their own religion. According to a narration of Imām al-Baghawī, this was the reason why the Jews too were displeased with the person who had made this unfortunate remark, and it was because of this erroneous conduct of his that he was removed from his office of religious authority.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that people who made this absurd remark did not recognize the Most True Allah as was His right to be recognized. Had they done that, this audacious remark would have never escaped their lips. Then, Allah Ta'ālā tells the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to ask the people who deny Scriptures absolutely: If that is what you think - that Allah Ta'ālā did not reveal any book to any human being - then, you better have an answer as to who revealed the Torah, in which you too believe, and because of which you sit in judgement over your people. Along with it, they were also told: You are such connoisseurs of crooked ways that you would treat your own book, the Torah, which you believe in as being Holy Scripture, in a way that you got it conveniently written on separate sheets, rather than having it in a formally bound book, so that you can take out any sheet from it as and when you want it, and by doing so you would have the option of denying what it enjoined. An example of this are the verses of the Torah which described the signs and attrib-

utes of the Messenger of Allah which you have excluded. The last sentence of the verse: *تَجْعَلُونَهَا قُرَاطِيسَ* (which you kept in sheets) means exactly this. The word: *قُرَاطِيسَ* (*qarāṭīs*) is the plural of: *قِرْطَاسٌ* (*qirtās*) which means sheet or paper.

After that, addressing the same people, it has been said: *وَعَلَّمْتُمْ مَا كَانُمْ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِهَا* that is, you were taught (through the Qur‘ān) what you or your forefathers did not know (earlier, either through the Torah or the Injīl).

At the end of verse (91), it was said: *قُلِ اللَّهُ لَمْ يَزَلْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ* (Say, "Allah." Then leave them playing with what they are indulged in). In other words, the sense is: As for the question - if Allah just did not send any book, who sent the Torah? - it was something they would not know how to answer, so, you go ahead and tell them that it was revealed by none but Allah. Now that the argument against them stands concluded, your mission as far as they are concerned is over. So, let them be lost in the game they are playing.

After having concluded the argument concerning Books revealed by Allah Ta‘ālā against deniers, it was said in the third verse (92): *وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مَبْرُوكٌ الَّذِي يَبِينُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِيُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا* (And this is a blessed Book We have sent down confirming what has been before it, so that you may warn the town which is the mother of all towns, and those around it), that is, as it is that they too accept that the Torah was sent down by Allah Ta‘ālā, so it is that We have sent down this Qur‘ān too, and sufficient for them is the proof of its veracity that the Qur‘ān confirms what has been revealed in the Torah and the Injīl. And that it was revealed after the Torah and Injīl is because these two Books were sent for the Banī Isrā‘īl while for their other branch of Banī Ismā‘īl, known as Arabs living in Umm al-Qurā, that is, Makkah and its environs, there has been no prophet or book of guidance until that time. Now this Qur‘ān has been sent for them particularly, and for the whole world generally. Makkah al-Mu‘azzamah has been called Umm al-Qura by the Holy Qur‘ān. It means the root and foundation of all towns and habitations. The reason is that, according to historical narratives, the land mass of the earth first began appearing from here. In addition to that, this is the Qiblah, and the central attraction of all acts of *Ibādah* for the whole world. (Mazharī) Said with: *أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ* (Umm al-

Qurā) is: وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا (and those around it). It means all environs of Makkah, which includes the whole world East, West, North and South of Makkah.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ It means: Those who believe in the ‘Ākhirah (Hereafter) also believe in the Qur‘ān and are particularly careful about their prayers (Ṣalāh). This carries an admonition for the Jews and disbelievers against their common ailment whereby they would, with typical lack of concern, accept what they liked and reject what they did not, opening a front against it. This is an effect of that ailment - that they do not believe in ‘Ākhirah. Anyone who believes in ‘Ākhirah and in a Day of Judgement will definitely be moved by the fear of Allah which would help him or her reason it out, and once convinced, one would bypass constraints of ignorant customs and embrace what is the truth.

A little thought would reveal that the lack of concern for the ‘Ākhirah is the mother of all spiritual diseases. From here come *Kufr* and *Shirk* and sin and disobedience. If a believer in the ‘Ākhirah happens to have committed a mistake or sin, he does feel a pinch in his heart. Sooner or later, he repents and resolves to stay away from sin in the future. So, the fear of Allah and the concern for the ‘Ākhirah are, in all truth, channels which make human beings what they should be and which make them capable of staying away from crime and sin and disobedience by conscious choice. Therefore, no Sūrah (Chapter) of the Qur‘ān, perhaps no *Rukū‘* (Section) either, is left without a reminder of this concern for the ‘Ākhirah:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ جُمْلَةَ هُمُومِنَا هَمًّا وَاحِدًا هَمَّ الْآخِرَةِ

O Allah, make all our concerns a single concern - the concern for ‘Ākhirah.

#### Verses 95 - 98

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَلِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالْتَّوَىٰ ۖ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ  
الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ۖ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ فَأَتَىٰ تَوْفِكُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ فَلِقُ  
الإِصْبَاحِ ۖ وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ۚ ذَلِكُمْ

تَقْدِيرِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ النُّجُومَ  
 لَتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ  
 يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ  
 وَمُسْتَوْدَعٌ ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾

**Surely, Allah is the one who splits the seed and the pit. He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the one who brings forth the dead from the living. That is Allah! Whereto, then, are you straying away? [95]**

**(He is) the One who causes the dawn to break. And He has made the night for rest and the sun and the moon for measurement. This is a measure set by (Allah) the Mighty, the Knowing. [96]**

**And He is the one who made for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in darknesses of the land and the sea. We have elaborated the signs for people who know. [97]**

**And He is the One who created you from one person, then, you have a place to dwell and a place to sojourn. We have elaborated the signs for people who understand. [98]**

### Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how obstinate and unmindful of consequences the disbelievers and poytheists were. Since such evils are caused when people remain unaware of Allah and His unmatched knowledge and power, the present four verses provide the antidote. Here, Allah Ta'ālā cites some samples of His Knowledge and Power, and of blessings and favours bestowed on human beings, a little reflection in which would make every sensible person admit that feats of such magnitude cannot be accomplished by any power other than that of Almighty Allah.

In the first verse (95), it was said: **إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَلْيُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى** (Surely, Allah is the one who splits the seed and the pit). Pointed to here is a marvel of creation. Splitting a dry seed and pit and bringing out from it a living green tree is the act of that Most Sacred Being who is the Creator of

the Universe. Human input has nothing to do with it. The most a farmer can do is to remove impediments or things harmful away from the growth path of the tender bud or shoot rising from inside the seed or pit, a tribute to the great power of the Creator. Of course, there are processes of ploughing, cleaning, softening, leveling, fertilizing and watering of land - but, the maximum these efforts can achieve is to make sure that the tender newcomer has to face no hurdle on its way up. The rest of the job, the real job, that the seed and pit split, that a bud or shoot sprout out from it, that come leaves of many wonderful kinds and colour, that come flowers and fruits (of mind-boggling colours, varieties, smells and tastes), is a job taken care of by someone else. This is art and power alive which no human ingenuity can even come close to by making one leaf, one petal in that manner. Therefore, at another place in the Qur‘ān, it was said: أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ ، أَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ that is, ‘Do you see the seed that you sow? Do you make it grow, or are We the One who makes it grow [the real Creator to whom its growth has to be attributed]? - 56-63.’

Then, it was said: مُبْرِجُ الْحَيِّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ (He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the one who brings forth the dead from the living). The ‘dead’ or lifeless refers to cell or egg which serve to create human and animal life forms. Similarly, the expression: ‘dead from the living’ refers to the same cell or egg which issues forth from the living.

After that, it was said: ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعُونَهُ (That is Allah. Whereto, then, are you straying away?). In other words, the sense is that all these things have been done by Allah Ta‘ālā alone, yet here you are knowingly straying away to strange directions, such as, taking self-carved idols as your removers of difficulties and fulfillers of needs and thus the objects of your worship.

Said in the second verse (96) is: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ (He is) the One who causes the dawn to break.’ The word: فَالِقٌ (*Fāliq*) means one who splits, and the word: الْإِصْبَاحُ (*al-Iṣḥāḥ*) here means the time of morning. Thus, the expression: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ (*Fāliq al-Iṣḥāḥ*) means one who splits the morning, that is, one who tears the dark layer of darkness apart and brings the morning out. This too is one of those functions of such magnitude that would render the combined powers of all Jinns and human beings and



all others to nothing. It does not take much to realize the truth of it. Everyone with a pair of sighted eyes is compelled to concede that the causer and creator of the morning light from the darkness of the night cannot be a human being, or angel, or any other created being, from fact or fiction. Instead of all that, the undeniable truth is that this is the work of that One Being that created the whole universe, a Being beyond human comprehension.

### Night for Rest is a Blessing

After that, it was said: **وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا** (And He has made the night for rest). The word: **سَكَنًا** (*sakan*) is a derivation from : **سُكُونٌ** (*sukūn*). Everything - means, time or place - by having or reaching which one feels peaceful and comfortable is called *sakan*, therefore, the home of a person has been referred to as *sakan* in the Holy Qur‘ān: **جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا** (Allah made for you your home a place to rest - 16:80). This is so because the home of a person, even if it be a hut, is a habitual source of peace and comfort. Therefore, this sentence comes to mean that Allah Ta‘ālā has made the night a time of peace and comfort for every living being. By saying: **فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ** (*Fāliq al-Iṣbāḥ*: the One who causes the dawn to break) mentioned there were blessings which one benefits from during the light of the day, something that would not be equally possible during the darkness of night. Then, by saying: **جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا** (made the night for rest) after that, indication was given that, no doubt the light of the day is a great blessing for human beings transacting most of their businesses and chores with its help, but not that bad is the darkness of night, for that too is a big blessing when it helps a person, all tired after a hard day’s work, get the rest needed to go back to work with recovered energy. Otherwise, human nature cannot withstand respite-less labour.

Earmarking the darkness of night for comfort is a regular blessing and, certainly, a special demonstration of the irresistably subjugating power of Allah Ta‘ālā. Since this blessing comes handy every day without having to ask for it, one hardly bothers to think how great a favour and reward it is. Imagine if everyone were to fix a time of rest with one’s choice, then, someone would be getting ready to sleep at eight in the morning, someone else at twelve noon and there will others sleeping at all sorts of odd hours during the day and night. The re-

sult would have been that there would have not come a single hour out of the twenty four hours of the night and day when human beings would have not been busy with their business, job or work and plants and factories would have not been working as usual. The inevitable result of such breathless activity would have been that the peace of the sleeping would have been disturbed and equally disadvantaged would have been those working on their jobs. The high decibel of discordant sounds emitting from traffic, factories and workers themselves would have interfered with the peace of the sleeping, and the absence of the sleeping would have affected those working on their jobs. In addition to that, those sleeping would have missed doing things which can be done only when it is time for them to sleep. In short, Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhū* has, in His great power to subdue, has set upon, not only human beings but on all living creatures, the weight of sleep in a manner that one is compelled to stop working and go to sleep. With the fall of dusk, birds and beasts and cattle head for their nests, lairs and homes. Man has to stop working as a compulsion and has to start looking towards his place of rest. Silence reigns. Darkness of night becomes an ally of sleep and rest, as light is usually not conducive to sleep.

Just imagine what would happen if all governments and peoples of the world joined hands in a global agreement to fix a universal time to sleep. First of all this would have posed too many problems. Then, should all human beings, abiding by a possible agreement, were to sleep at an appointed time, who would have made animals abide by that agreement? If they roamed around scot-free what would have happened to the sleeping human beings and their belongings? Most exalted is the majesty of Allah and great is His power to subdue that He has appointed sleep to descend upon every human being and every living creature at a given time compulsively, and thus, He has saved them from the very need of such international agreements: فَتَبَرَّكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ (So, blessed be Allah, the Best of creators) (23:14).

### Solar and Lunar Calendar

In the next sentence : وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ مُحْسَبَاتًا (and the sun and the moon for measurement), the word: مُحْسَبَاتًا (*Husban*) is a verbal noun and is used to mean to count, measure, calculate or compute. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta‘ālā has appointed the rising and setting and the move-

ment of the sun and the moon in a particular measure through which human beings can easily calculate years, months, days, hours, even minutes and seconds.

Again, this is the manifestation of the same Divine power to subdue and commission into desired action that such huge glowing globes of awesome proportions and their movements have been so formidably programmed to perform according to measure which just does not vary even by a second despite the passage of thousands of years. Whatever machinery has been employed to make them function so flawlessly certainly needs no workshop, nor needed there is our customary repair and replacement of time-barred parts. The spheres of light, their function, their movement, everything in the system is performing perfectly as commanded: *لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ* : "It behoves not the sun to overtake the moon, neither does the night outstrip the day" - 36:40 (as translated by Arberry). Alas, it must have been because of this formidable and changeless Divine system that man was mistaken as he took these manifestation of the system as existing in their own right, even went on to the limits of worshipping them. Had this system been open to flaws, a little malfunction here and there, some time out for repairs, then, one would have discovered that this mechanism is not automatic, somebody has made it and somebody keeps it running. But, such has been the brilliance and permanence of these great heavenly bodies that human beings have been blinded to the reality behind. It was to let them know what it was that came scriptures and prophets and messengers.

This statement of the Qur'an also indicates that the calculation of years and months can be solar and it can be lunar as well. Both are rewards from Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū*. It is a different matter that the lunar calendar has been used in Islamic injunctions for the sake of providing convenience to the common masses of the world so that they do not have to undergo the trouble of complicated calculations. Since Islamic history and Islamic injunctions are based on lunar calendar, it is an obligation on the Muslim *Ummah* that it retains and protects this calendar. As for other methods of calculation, such as the Solar or Gregorian calendar, if they are adopted because of some necessity, there is no sin in it. But, ignoring the lunar calendar totally and let-

ting it be forgotten is a grave sin - an unfortunate conduct which may lead to a situation in which a Muslim does not know when the months of Ramaḍān, Dhil-Hijjah and Muḥarram will come.

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said: **ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ** (This is a measure set by [Allah] the Mighty, the Knowing). It means that this wondrous system of movement, precise and perpetual, at the scale of such magnitude, something which does not admit the difference of a second, can only be the charismatic feat of the supreme power of the One who is Al-‘Azīz, the Mighty, and who is the Subduer of whatever there is, and who is fully capable of articulating His Will as He deems fit and, beside that, He is Knowing, having the knowledge of everything and the mastery of doing what He elects to do.

In the third verse (97), it was said: **وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ** (And He is the one who made for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in 'darknesses' of the land and the sea). In other words, it is being said here that there are other stars too, besides the sun and the moon, which are no less unique a manifestation of the perfect power of Almighty Allah. Out of many considerations of Divine wisdom, one immediate benefit they provide for human beings travelling on high seas or open lands is that they can chart their course in the darkness of nights when it is not easy to do so. Experience bears out that even in the days of highly sophisticated guiding systems, there are alternative situations when the guidance from the position of stars cannot be totally ignored.

The point made in this verse is that one should rise above heedlessness and shortsightedness and see that these stars are also there observing the command of their maker and mover. They are there neither by themselves nor to be there nor to keep doing what they do for ever. Those who have pinned their sights on them and have ignored to look at their maker are terribly short-sighted, and ominously deceived indeed.

After that, it was said: **قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ** (We have elaborated the signs for people who know). The statement clearly indicates that those who do not recognize the presence and power of Allah Ta‘ālā even from such open signs are unaware and unconscious.

In the fourth verse (98), it was said: **وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُسْتَوْدَعًا** (And He is the One who created you from one person, then, you have a place to dwell, and a place to sojourn). The word: **مُسْتَقَرًّا** (*mustaqarr*) used in the text is from: **قَرَارًا** (*qarār*). So, *mustaqarr* denotes a place of *qarār*, of rest and peace, for someone or something. As for the word: **مُسْتَوْدَعًا** (*mustawda'*) in the text, it is a derivation from *wadī'ah* which means to keep something with someone temporarily for a few days. So, "*mustawda'*" will denote a place where something is placed temporarily for a few days.

Thus, the sense of the sentence would be: It is the sacred-most Being of Allah Ta'ālā that has created man from one person, that is, Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام. Then, made for him a *mustaqarr*, that is, a place to dwell for a certain length of time - and a *mustawda'*, that is, to stay temporarily for a few days.

The words of the Qur'an are as they have been stated. But, there are many probabilities in their interpretation. This is why the sayings of the commentators differ in this matter. Some say that *mustawda'* is the womb of the mother and *mustaqarr* is this world. Others say that *mustawda'* is the grave and *mustaqarr* is the abode of the 'Ākhirah. Then, there are several other sayings too. However, there is room for all these within the words of the Qur'an. Haḍrat Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānīpatī رحمه الله عليه has, in his *Tafsīr Maẓharī*, opted for *mustaqarr* being the abode of 'Ākhirah, that is, *Jannah* or *Jahannam*- and all human conditions and stages, from the beginning to the 'Ākhirah, are all the *mustawda'*, that is, a place to stay temporarily, whether in the womb of the mother, or a dwelling place on the earth, or the grave, or the state of *Barzakh* (intermediary state after death and before Resurrection). Preference for this view seems to have confirmation from a verse of the Qur'an also where it has been said: **لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٍ** (you shall surely travel from stage to stage - 84:19). The outcome is that, before ultimately reaching the abode of the 'Ākhirah, man remains a traveller for his whole life who, despite his obvious peace and rest, is really traversing the stages of the long journey into the night of his being:

مسافر ہوں کہاں جانا ہے ، نا واقف ہوں منزل سے  
ازل سے پھرتے پھرتے گورتک پہنچا ہوں مشکل سے

A traveller I am. My destination I know not.  
 Winding and wandering from eternity  
 Only upto the grave I have reached -  
 How tough I know. What next I know not.

In conclusion, it can be said that this last verse (98) under study is showing a mirror to those who, having sold their souls to the veneer of glamour they see in the obvious and to the craze for things and trends they envy in their fellow beings, have forgotten that their place is elsewhere, that they have to go to their Creator and that there is a journey ahead, to the ultimate domain of the 'Ākhirah. The message is: Open your eyes, see reality, walk away from the web of deception and walk into salvation.

### Verses 99 - 102

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً ۖ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
 فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُخْرَجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مَاتِرًا كِبَاءً ۖ وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ  
 مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَجَنَّاتٍ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ  
 مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ۗ انظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ ۗ إِنَّ  
 فِي ذَٰلِكُمْ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ  
 الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ  
 وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ بَدِيعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَنَّىٰ  
 يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صَاحِبَةٌ ۗ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۗ وَهُوَ  
 بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۖ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ خَالِقُ  
 كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۗ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

And He is the one who sent down water from the heavens, then, with it, We brought forth vegetation of all kinds. Then from it We brought grains set upon one another. And from the palm-trees, from their spathes, come forth the low-hanging bunches. And (We produce) vineyards, the olive, the pomegranate, similar or not similar to each other. Look at its fruit when it

bears fruit, and at its ripening. Surely, in all this there are signs for the people who believe. [99]

And they have invented partners with Allah, the Jinns - while He has created them - and they have forged for Him sons and daughters without any knowledge. Pure is He, and far higher than they describe. [100]

(He is) the originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have a son when He never had a wife? And He created everything, and He knows everything. [101]

This is Allah: your Lord, there is no God but He, the creator of everything; so, worship Him. And He is Guardian over everything. [102]

### Commentary

The contents of this verse present a unique concern for thematic order. It will be noticed that three kinds of universes have been mentioned here: The low, the high and the atmosphere - that is, what generates in what we know as the Biosphere. The description was initiated with the mention of that which is on the lower level because it is closer to us. Then, it was split in two parts. One part of the statement covered vegetation which grows on the land, plants and trees and gardens. The other part featured life forms as beasts, human beings and animals. The first part was given precedence because it is more obvious as compared to the other. Then comes the case of that which has been made to come after, the other part. This is different. It has *Rūḥ*, soul or spirit. It is deep, depends on progression from the sperm to its various stages and attending conditions, something allied with the comprehension, diagnosis and judgement of physicians - contrary to the case of vegetation which, in its growth, flowering and ripening etc., is observable commonly. Then, mentioned there was the atmosphere and its life support system, the morning and the evening. Then, came the mention of what is higher, the sun, the moon, and the stars. After that, since what is at the lower level is observed more frequently, the subject was repeated and made the concluding statement. But, firstly it was taken up briefly, now it was taken up in detail - yet, in the order of this detail, the order of brevity was reversed by giving precedence to life forms and succession to the mention of vegetation. Perhaps, its

basis is that the detailed statement highlights the expression of gratitude for blessings which, in that status, makes the blessed - being the intended recipients - deserving of being given precedence. As for vegetation, the previous order stays as the status of the donees, that is, of seeds and pits, remains preceded. That rain has been mentioned in between is subservient to the mention of vegetation. Incidentally, there might be another element of refinement here - in that rain has different states. In terms of its origin, it comes from the high; and in terms of its destination, it comes down to the low; and in terms of the distance covered, it is part of the atmosphere.

### Verses 103 - 107

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٠٣﴾  
 قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾  
 اتَّبِعْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

No vision can comprehend Him and He comprehends all visions, and He is All-Fine, All-Aware. [103]

(Say, O Prophet:) There have come to you insights from your Lord. Now, whoever uses his sight, does so for his own self, and whoever remains blind does so against himself. And I do not stand guard over you. [104]

And this is how We bring a variety of verses so that they say, "you have been tutored" and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge. [105]

Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord. There is no god but He. And turn away from those who associate partners with Allah. [106]

And if Allah willed, they would not have associated.



**And We have not made you to stand guard over them,  
and you are not entrusted with their affairs. [107]**

### Commentary

Out of these five verses of Sūrah Al-An‘ām, the word: أَبْصَارٌ : ‘*al-abṣār*’ appearing in the first verse (103), is the plural of : بَصَرٌ (*baṣar*) which means vision, sight or ability to see, while the word: إِدْرَاكٌ (*idrāk*) means to reach, grasp, perceive, comprehend or encompass. Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه has explained the meaning of ‘*idrāk*’ at this place as to comprehend or encompass. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Thus, the sense of the verse comes to be that even the combined ability of seeing given to the entire creation, to Jinns and humans and angels, and to the rest of the life forms, can never see Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhū* in a way that their vision would encompass His Being. But, as for Him, He watches the vision of His entire creation fully, and His ‘seeing’ encompasses all of them. Mentioned in this brief verse are two particular attributes of Allah Ta‘ālā.

1. Allah is Imperceivable: No eye in the whole universe, not even the combined eyesights of everyone, can encompass His Being.

Sayyidnā Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: If all human beings, Jinn, angels and Shaytan, from the first to the last, were to stand in a row, even their combined sights cannot comprehend His Being. (Maḥzarī with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim)

Thus, so unique an attribute can belong to none but to the most-exalted Being of Allah. Otherwise, the sight bestowed by Allah on even the most insignificant life form of His creation can see with its mini-eyes much larger bodies and comprehend what they are. The sun and the moon are spheres of great magnitude, our earth being no match to them, yet the human eye, even the eyes of the smallest of animals, would see them in a way that would encompass their presence.

The truth of the matter is that the human eye is one sense organ out of the many given to human beings which enable them to see and react to what is perceptible. But, the Sacred Being of Allah Ta‘ālā is beyond the all-surrounding, all-comprehending overview of even reason and conjecture. There is no way this knowledge could be acquired

by one single sense of sight. The Being and the Attributes of Allah Ta‘ālā are limitless while human senses, reason and imagination are all limited. It is obvious that the limitless cannot fit into the limited. This is why the philosophers and metaphysicians of the world who spent their lives in intellectual research and the respected Sufis who traversed through this difficult spiritual field through the medium of Illumination (*Kashf*) and Experiencing of the Presence (*Shuhud*) all agree upon the proposition that neither has anyone arrived at the total comprehension of the reality of His Being and Attributes, nor is that possible.

### The Possibility of Seeing the Creator

The question is: Is it possible for human beings to see Allah Ta‘ālā, or is it not? On this religious question or *mas‘alah*, the belief of all ‘*Ulamā* of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah* (the majority of Muslims who adhere to the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Ṣaḥābah) is that it is not possible to see the Being of Allah Ta‘ālā in the state of life we have in this mortal world. This is the reason why, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed: رَبِّ ارْنِيْ (My Lord, show (Yourself) to me - 7:143), the answer given was: كُنْ تَرَانِيْ (‘lan tarānī’ : ‘you shall never see Me’ - 7:143). It is obvious when this is the answer given to a prophet no less than Sayyidnā Mūsā the Kalīmullāh عليه السلام, no Jinn or human being can even dare think about it. However, that believing Muslims will have the honour of seeing Allah Ta‘ālā in the ‘*Ākhirah* stands proved on the authority of sound (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) and strong ‘*Āḥādīth* which have been reported in uninterrupted succession (*mutawātir*). And this is what appears in the Qur‘ān itself:

وَجُوهٌ يُّؤْمِنُ تَائِبَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاطِرَةٌ

Faces on that Day shall be glowing, towards their Lord gazing! - 75:22

However, the disbelievers and the deniers will not have the honour of seeing Allah Ta‘ālā even on that Day, as punishment, as in a verse of the Qur‘ān:

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمْ حُجُّوا

No indeed; surely from (the sighting of) their Lord on that Day, they shall be deprived - 83:15.

The Ziarah (the honour of seeing or visiting) of Allah Ta‘ālā shall take place in ‘*Ākhirah* at several places - and on the Day of Resurrection (*Al-Maḥshar*) as well as after reaching *Jannah* (Paradise). For the people of *Jannah*, the Ziarah of Allah Ta‘ālā shall be the greatest of all blessings.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When the people of *Jannah* have entered *Jannah*, Allah Ta‘ālā will ask them if they need any more blessings besides what they have already received in *Jannah*; if so, let them ask and they shall be granted those too. They will say: O Allah, You granted us deliverance from *Jahannam* (Hell), and admitted us into the *Jannah* (Paradise). What else could we ask for? That would be the time when the Veil shall stand removed, everyone shall have the honour to see Allah Ta‘ālā, and of all the blessings of *Jannah*, this will be the greatest. This *Hadīth* appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim as reported by Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb رضى الله عنه .

As reported in a *Hadīth* from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sitting under moonlight. His noble Saḥābah were with him. He looked at the moon, then said: You shall see your *Rabb* with your own eyes ( in the ‘*Ākhirah*) in a way you are seeing this moon.

In a *Hadīth* of Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه that people blessed with special ranks of *Jannah* by Allah Ta‘ālā will have the good fortune of seeing Him every morning and evening.

In short, no one can see Allah Ta‘ālā in the mortal world while, in the ‘*Ākhirah*, all those in *Jannah* will see Him. As for the Ziyarah made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the night of *Mi‘rāj* (the Ascent to the Heavens), that too was, in reality, the Ziarah of Allah Ta‘ālā as it would be in the *Ākhirah*. According to Shaykh Muḥiyuddīn ibn al-‘Arabī, the world is what lies circumscribed by the skies. Beyond that is the domain of ‘*Ākhirah*. A Ziyarah there cannot be called a Ziyarah here in the world.

Now, still unanswered remains the question: When we know from the verse of the Qur‘ān: لَا تَدْرِكُهُ الْبَصَارُ (no vision can comprehend Him), that is, human beings just cannot see Allah Ta‘ālā, how would that be-

come possible in the 'Ākhirah? The obvious answer is that the verse of the Qur‘ān does not mean that the *Ru‘yah*, *Ziyarah* or Seeing of Allah Ta‘ālā is impossible for human beings. Instead of that, the meaning of the verse is that human vision cannot comprehend or encompass His Being because His Being is unlimited while human vision is limited.

Even the *Ziyarah* made in the 'Ākhirah will be in a manner that vision would still fail to comprehend Him fully; while in the mortal world, human beings and their vision do not have the strength and capacity to bear by 'seeing' even in this manner. Therefore, this *ru‘yah* or seeing is absolutely impossible in the mortal world. But, in the 'Ākhirah, given the strength and capability, this *ru‘yah*, *ziyarah*, or seeing would become possible - but, a full, all-encompassing comprehending of the Most-True Being of Allah *Subhānuhu wa Ta‘ālā* would still remain impossible even then.

**2. Allah is All-Perceiving:** The second attribute of Allah Ta‘ālā mentioned in this verse is that His vision encompasses the whole universe. Nothing, anywhere, not even the minutest particle, is hidden from Him. This Absolute Knowledge with all-pervading, all-comprehending reach, is also a unique attribute of Allah Ta‘ālā. Other than Him, no created being has ever achieved such all-inclusive knowledge of everything, nor shall it ever be possible - because this is the domain of Allah, the most-exalted in His majesty.

After that it was said: (and He is All-Fine, All-Aware). Lexically, the word: اللطيف (*al-Laṭīf*) has two meanings: (a) kind, (b) fine or subtle in contrast with thick or course, that is, what cannot be perceived through the senses.

As for the word: الخبير (*al-Khabīr*), it means All-Aware. Thus, the sentence comes to mean that Allah Ta‘ālā is All-Fine (*Al-Laṭīf*), therefore, He cannot be comprehended through the senses - and He is All-Aware (*Al-Khabīr*), therefore, nothing in the entire universe is beyond His knowledge and awareness. If *Al-Laṭīf* is taken to mean kind at this place, it will be suggesting that though Allah Ta‘ālā is All-Aware of everything we say or do, even what we intend, think or feel - which would have required that we should have been caught for every sin - but, He is kind and gracious too, therefore, He does not call us to account for every sin.

The word: *بَصَائِرَ* (*baṣā'ir*) appearing in the second verse (104) is the plural of *baṣīrah* which means reason, intelligence or insight, that is, the power through which one can acquire the knowledge of things which do not fall within the range of perception through the senses. '*Baṣā'ir*', in this verse, means the evidences and sources through which one can get to know truth and reality. The meaning of the verse is: The sources and means of seeing the truth have reached you from Allah, that is, the Qur'an has come, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come, manifest have been his miracles, and observed openly were his morals and dealings and teachings. All these are means of seeing the truth.

So, whoever has used these means has become the one blessed with true insight with his benefits secured, while the one who elected to remain blind to the truth by ignoring these means ends up losing what was good.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: 'I do not stand guard over you.' It means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has not been given the responsibility of forcing people to stop doing what was improper, as usually done by one appointed to oversee and guard (or self-appointed as vigilantes in our day). Instead, the functional responsibility of a messenger of Allah is only to convey commands, and explain. After that, following or not following the message conveyed becomes a matter of personal discretion and responsibility of the addressees.

It will be recalled that many clear arguments in favour of *Tauhid* (Oneness of Allah) and *Risālah* (The Veracity of Prophethood) had appeared in previous verses. It is to these that reference has been made in the third verse (105) here where it has been said: *كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ* (And this is how We bring forth a variety of verses [where arguments are presented from different angles]).

After that, it was said: *وَلِيُقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ* (so that they may say, "you have been tutored" and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge). From here it can be inferred that all aids to guidance in the form of miracles, signs, proofs, and the matchless Qur'an itself were all solid means to help see truth. Then, there was the spectacle of a total *Ummiyy* expressing with inimitable eloquence volumes of knowledge and reality through his blessed speech which has left the wise of the world wondering. And how could one bypass

the eloquence and truth of the Word of Allah which could not be imitated even to the scale of one small Sūrah, despite the challenge to all Jinn and human beings valid upto the end of time? As we said, these were means to help people know and see the truth as it was. Such was the class and substance of this treasure trove of truth that even the most diehard denier should have fallen on the blessed feet of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ! But, people who were chronically crooked in their ways started saying: “دَرَسْتَ” (*darasta*), that is, ‘you have been tutored.’

Then, said along with it was: وَرَبِّعِنَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge). Its essential meaning is that the statement made proved to be beneficial for those who were understanding, sensible and wise. As for the sources of guidance, those were surely placed before everyone, but the crooked took no advantage of the opportunity offered while the wise ones owned them heartily and became the leaders of their world.

In the fourth verse (106), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been guided to a specific course of action. He has been asked not to worry about the acceptance or non-acceptance of the call. For him, the best course was to keep following the way revealed to him through Wahy from his *Rabb*, the major element of which is the belief that no one is worthy of worship but Allah. That he should continue preaching with his message of truth is part of what has been revealed. So, believing in Allah and remaining steadfast on the way ordained for him, he should avoid feeling concerned about disbelievers and their unfortunate non-acceptance of the call.

The reason for this has been given in the fifth verse (107). There it has been said: If Allah Ta‘ālā had willed - in consideration of His own creational imperative - that the whole human race should become Muslim in faith, then, it would have become impossible for them to associate partners in the Divinity of Allah (*Shirk*). But, it was because of their misdeeds that Allah willed that they be punished. So, He created the necessary conditions for that end. Now, how could he make them Muslims under these circumstances? In fact, why should he worry about what they choose to do with their lives? Allah has not made him to stand guard over what they do, nor has he been authorized by Allah to bring punishment on them for their misdeeds. Therefore, he should

not have any anxiety on account of what they do to themselves or for themselves.

### Verses 108 - 113

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا  
بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلُهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ  
مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ  
جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَنَبِيٍّ جَاءَ تَهُمْ آيَةً لِّيُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا ۗ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ  
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾  
وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ  
وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ  
الْمَلَكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْئِي وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قَبْلًا مَا كَانُوا  
لِيُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾  
وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي  
بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ  
مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرُهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلِتَصْغَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَفئِدَةُ  
الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَلِيَرْضَوْهُ وَلِيَقْتَرِفُوا مَا هُمْ  
مُقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

And do not abuse\* those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they should abuse\* Allah trangressingly without knowledge. This is how We have made the deeds of every community attractive in their sight. Then, to their Lord is their return whereafter He shall tell them what they have been doing. [108]

And they swore by Allah on eloquent oaths that if a sign comes to them, they shall surely believe in it. Say, "Signs are, definitely, with Allah." And what will make

\*. Insult using foul language.

you realize that even when they (the signs) come, they will not believe - [109] and We upset their hearts and sights - as they did not believe in them the first time. And We leave them wandering blindly in their rebellion. [110]

And if We had sent down to them the angels and the dead had spoken to them and (even if) We had gathered everything before them, face to face, still, they were not to believe unless Allah would have so willed. But, most of them go for ignorance. [111]

And similarly, We have made enemies for every prophet, the satans of mankind and jinn. They reveal to one another ornamented words in order to deceive. And had Allah willed, they would have not done so. So, leave them with what they forge [112] - and in order that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline to it and so that they commit what they are to commit. [113]

### Commentary

The first of the present verses has been revealed concerning a particular event and provides guidance in a matter of principle, that is, what you are not permitted to do yourself, for that you cannot become the cause or channel either - both shall remain equally impermissible.

### The Background of Revelation

According to the background of revelation as narrated by Ibn Jarīr, when Abū Ṭālib, the respected uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was on his death bed, the disbelieving chiefs of the tribe of Quraysh who, hostile and torturous to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, always plotting to kill him, became alarmed at the eventuality of the death of Abū Ṭālib which was likely to become an impediment to their nefarious designs. Because, they thought, if they were to kill Muḥammad ﷺ after his protective uncle's death, that would go against the norms of their own self-respect and honour, for people would say that they were unable to do anything like that in the presence of Abū Ṭālib, but when he died, they killed his helpless nephew. So, they decided to get together and go to Abū Ṭālib to talk about the matter in a decisive manner.

Every educated Muslim knows that Abū Ṭālib, though he had not



formally embraced Islam, loved the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم dearly, even respected him as a great bearer of the Divine message right from his heart, and always defended him against his enemies.

So, the Quraysh chiefs formed a deputation who would go to see Abū Ṭālib. Included as members of the deputation were Abū Sufyān, Abū Jahl, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and some others. The name of the person chosen to arrange for an appointment to meet with Abū Ṭālib was Muṭṭalib. He got his permission and escorted the deputation to him.

To Abū Ṭālib, the deputation said: You are our elder, and a chief, and you know that your nephew, Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has been causing great pain to the idols we worship. We wish that you would talk to him and prevail on him that he should say nothing offensive against our idols, in which case, we shall make peace on the principle that he acts as he wishes on his faith, takes whoever he chooses as the object of his worship, against which, we shall raise no objection.

Abū Ṭālib called the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to him and said: Here are the chiefs of your clan. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned to the deputation and asked: What is your wish? They said: We wish that you leave us and our idols alone. Do not speak ill of them. We shall leave you and your object of worship alone. This will end our mutual hostility.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: All right, you tell me, if I were to accept what you were saying, would you be ready to say a *Kalimah* (statement in words) by saying which you would become masters of the whole Arabia with even people from beyond subscribing to your authority?

Abū Jahl said: You are talking about only one *Kalimah*. We are ready to say ten of them. Tell us what are they? The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ [Lā Ilāha Illallāh : There is no god (worthy of worship) but Allah]. That infuriated all of them. Abū Ṭālib said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: O my nephew, say something other than this *Kalimah* because it has left your clansmen all confused.

He said: As for me, I cannot say a *Kalimah* other than this. If they were to bring the sun down from the skies and put in my hands, even then I will not say a *Kalimah* other than this. His intention was to let

them become totally disappointed.

Thereupon, still in anger, they said: Either you stop speaking ill of our idols, the objects of our worship, or we too are going to start using insulting language against you, and also against that Being of which you claim to be the messenger. Revealed, thereupon, was the verse: وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (And do not abuse those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they abuse Allah transgressively without knowledge).

“لَا تَسُبُّوا” (*lā tasubbū*) in this verse is a derivation from the word: سَبَّ (*sabb*) which means to abuse or use insulting language against someone (not in the sense of misuse, maltreatment or corrupt practice as currently used in American English which uses other alternates for hurling invectives – Tr.). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, given his intrinsically high moral disposition, had already been abiding by this rule of conduct. Not even during his childhood, had his blessed speech ever been contaminated with an abusive word for any human being, rather not even for an animal. Perhaps, there may have been some hard word which escaped the lips of some from among the noble Companions which was overestimated as an invective by the disbelievers of Makkah, and which was used as a pretext by the chiefs of the Quraysh when their deputation brought this case up before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and gave the ultimatum that either he stops insulting their deities or they would start insulting theirs.

Thereupon, came the Qur'anic injunction through which Muslims were prohibited from making any insulting statement against the false objects worshipped by disbelievers. Particularly worth noticing in this verse is that, just a verse earlier (106-107), the address was to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Examples are: اَتَّبِعْ مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ (Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord) and: اَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (and turn away from those who associate partners with Allah) and: مَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا (And We have not made you stand guard over them) and: مَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (and you are not entrusted with their affairs). In all these grammatical forms, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the addressee who was being asked to do or not to do something. After that, the form of address was changed in the present verse. It was turned away from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and was turned to Muslims in general.

Said there was: لَا تُسُبُّوْا (lā tasubbū). The hint given thereby is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who had never used abusive speech against anyone to start with, could not be directly addressed with the words of prohibition for that could make him disheartened. Therefore, the address was made general - and all Ṣaḥābah عليه السلام too started taking precaution in this matter. (As in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

### Related Considerations

That idols have been mentioned in strong words in several verses of the Qur'an, and that those verses are not abrogated either for they are still recited, is a different matter.

The answer is that such words wherever they appear in the verses of the Qur'an are there as a polemic or debating device to unfold some reality clearly. Intended at such places is no aggression, nor can a sensible person deduce from it such an intention to malign idols or to mock at disbelievers or to irritate them. This is an open difference in approach which is readily understood by those aware of the nuances of diction in any language. They know that the shortcoming or inadequacy of a person is called in question only to elucidate an issue in question. This is common practice in courts where no one challenges the statement being made before the Court as the throwing of invectives against someone. Similarly, narrated before physicians are the kind of defects and drawbacks people could have which, if described elsewhere would be taken as invectives hurled at someone. But, such statement made under medical need is not regarded as abusive talk by anyone.

Thus, when the Qur'an describes the helplessness of idols in being devoid of sense and consciousness, knowledge and power, it uses a manner of speaking which would help the understanding to understand reality and expose the error or short-sightedness of those who do not. Hence, it was said: 'ضَعْفَ الطَّالِبِ وَالْمَطْلُوبِ' 'Weak are the seekers and weak, the sought (idols) - 22:73.' And as it was said: 'إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ' (You, and what you worship, other than Allah, are but fuel for Hell - 21:98). Here too, the purpose is not to speak ill of someone. The purpose is to state the sad end of straying and error. Muslim jurists, may the mercy of Allah be upon them, have made it all clear by explaining: If anyone were to recite this verse too as a tool aimed at

causing irritation for disbelievers, then, for him, this recitation at that time and for that purpose, shall be considered as included under this ‘abusing which is prohibited,’ and will, therefore, be impermissible - as is the case in the prohibition of the recitation of the Qur‘ān at times and places which are *Makrūh* (reprehensible) and known to everyone. (Ruḥ al-Ma‘ānī).

To sum up, it can be said that, no word which could be taken as abusive was ever said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or had appeared in the Holy Qur‘ān, nor was there any apprehension that it could happen in the future. Of course, the probability that Muslims at large may fall into such impulsive action did exist, therefore, this verse stopped them from doing so. This event and the Qur‘ānic instruction based on it has provided access to a large body of significant knowledge, some examples of which are given below:

### **Becoming the Cause or Agent of a Sin is also a Sin**

1. One of the principles thus deduced is: If doing something which is permissible intrinsically - in fact, even commendable in a certain degree - but, in the actual doing of it some corruption has to be accommodated, or as a result of which, people are let into sin, then, the doing of such a thing is also prohibited. The reason is that identifying false objects of worship, that is, the idols, is, at least, permissible after all - and if said under the need to uphold one’s religious feelings, it may perhaps be even worthy of praise and reward - but, since this resulted in the apprehension that people would start speaking ill of Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhū* which, in turn, would make the degraders of idols the cause of this evil, therefore, prohibited was the act which was already permissible.

2. Another example of this appears in *Hadīth* where, addressing his Companions, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: No one should abuse (use insulting language against) his or her parents. The Companions submitted: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, it is just not possible that one will abuse parents. He said: Yes, one does not usually do that. But, when such a person abuses the parents of someone else and, as a consequence of it, the other person abuses his parents, then, the cause of his parents being so abused was this very son. So, he too is like one who has himself abused his parents.

3. Yet another instance of a case of this nature came to pass during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He said to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that the Baytullah (the Holy Ka'bah) had collapsed on its foundations in an accident during the *Jāhiliyyah*. The Quraysh of Makkah reconstructed it before the advent of prophethood.

In this structure, some details turned out to be against the initial Ibrāhīmī foundation. One of them was the part now known as Ḥaṭīm. This too is part of the Baytullah. It was left out because of paucity of funds. Then, there were two doors of Baytullah, the Eastern and the Western - one for entry and the other for exit. The people of *Jāhiliyyah* closed the Western door. The one door left was raised higher than the ground level so that entry into the Baytullah would depend on their will and permission and that no one could go there freely. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I wish I could demolish the present structure of Baytullah and make it like the structure raised by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام. But, the danger is that your people, that is, the common Arabs, who have entered the fold of Islam just now, may fall a victim to some doubts at the sight of Baytullah being demolished, therefore, I have abandoned my intention.

It goes without saying that raising the structure of Baytullah precisely on the foundations laid down by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was an act of obedience and a deed deserving of merit and reward. But, seeing the shadows of a danger lurking behind this intended action because of the ignorance of people around, he abandoned that idea. So, from this event too, there emerges the same principle that, should there be an apprehension of some evil or corruption necessarily resulting from what is permissible, even from what is otherwise an act of *thawāb* or merit, then, that permissible or *thawāb*-worthy act too becomes impermissible.

But, there exists a strong doubt about this principle which has been reported from Abū Mansūr in Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī. The proposition posed is: Allah Ta'ālā has made *Jihād* binding on Muslims - though, the inevitable outcome of killing is that, when a Muslim will start killing some non-Muslim, they would start killing Muslims - and killing Muslims is *Ḥarām* (forbidden). Thus, given this principle, *Jihad* should also be prohibited. Then, the same will hold valid about our propaga-

tion of Islam and the recitation of the Qur‘ān, and about *Adhān* and *Ṣalāh* as well, all of which are subjected to mockery and ridicule by many among the disbelievers. If so, shall we surrender our right to worship and promote our religion?

Answering this, Abū Mansur has himself said that this doubt has come up because of ignoring a necessary condition. That condition is that a permissible act which has been prohibited, because of the apprehension of something evil, should not be one of the basic objectives and necessary duties in Islam. Thus, speaking ill of false objects of worship does not relate to any objective of Islam. Similarly, no basic Islamic objective depends on making the structure of Baytullah conform precisely to the foundations laid out by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Therefore, whenever there was the danger of some religious mal-situation cropping up by doing what was permissible, or even reward-worthy, such acts or intentions were abandoned. As for acts which are either the very Islamic objectives in themselves, or on them depends some Islamic objective, then, even if the wrongdoings of other people seem to be bringing visible corruption or evil in its wake, then, these objectives will never be surrendered or abandoned. Instead of that, effort will be made that such permissible acts should keep continuing in their place, and steps will be taken to block the spreading of evils and corrupting agents as far as possible.

This is why two great men of Islamic history acted the way they did. Once Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله عليه and Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sirīn رحمه الله went out to participate in the *Ṣalāh* for a *Janāzah*. There, they noticed a gathering which had men as well as women. Seeing this Ibn Sirīn returned back. But, Ḥadrat Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: Why should we leave doing what is necessary because of the false practice or ways of other people? The *Ṣalāh* of *Janāzah* is *Fard* (obligatory). It cannot be abandoned because of this corrupting agent. Of course, effort will be made, as far as possible, that this evil is rooted out.

This event too has been reported in *Ruḥ al-Ma‘ānī*.

So, the substance of this principle which emerges from this verse comes to be: An act which is permissible in itself, even if it be an act of obedience and *thawāb* - but, not be one of the religiously binding objectives, then, should doing it bring forth evil consequences, abandoning

of that permissible act becomes *Wājib* (necessary). This is contrary to the case of the objectives of the *Shari'ah* which cannot be abandoned because of any impending evil or corruption.

From this principle, the jurists of the Muslim community have deduced solutions to thousands of problems. Some examples of their juristic efforts are:

1. If a person has a disobedient son and he knows that, should he ask him to do something, he would refuse to do it and even prefer to do against it, in which case, he will become liable to a grave sin, then, in such a situation, the father should not ask him to do or not to do something as an order, instead of which, he should say so in the mode of a good counsel - for example, he says to him, 'if such and such job could be done, that would be nice' - so that, in the eventuality of a refusal or reverse action, the son does not become liable to the sin of a new disobedience. (*Khulāṣatul-Fatāwā*)

2. The same rule holds good in matters where well-meaning advice is given to someone. If circumstantial indicators show that a person, rather than take advice, is more likely to take a worse course, as a result of which, he will sink deeper into sin, then, in such a situation, to give up advising is better. In his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Imām al-Bukhārī has introduced a regular chapter on this subject:

باب من ترك بعض الاختيار مخافة ان يقصر فهم بعض الناس فيقعوا في  
أشد منه

There are occasions when things permissible, even those commendable, are abandoned lest they put common people in misunderstanding - subject to the condition that these acts are not from the core objectives of Islam.

3. But, acts which are included under the objectives of Islam - whether *Fard*, *Wājib* or *Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah* (obligatory, necessary or emphasized *Sunnah*) or other kinds of Islamic hallmarks - if by observing them some people lacking in understanding start falling in misunderstanding, then, these acts will not be abandoned, rather, other methods will be used to remove the misunderstanding and misdoing of such people. Events which came to pass in early Islam prove that the disbelievers of Makkah were provoked because of *Ṣalāh*, the recita-

tion of the Qur‘ān and the preaching of Islam. But, the standing hallmarks of Islam were never abandoned because of such adverse conditions. In fact, the very episode relating to Abū Jahl and the rest of Quraysh chiefs recounted under the Background of Revelation of the present verse has proved the point eloquently. The essence of the episode was that the chiefs from the disbelieving Quraysh tribe wished to give a guarantee of peace if the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would abandon preaching *Tauhīd*, that is, stop calling Allah One. The answer given by him was: I can never do that, even if they were to bring the sun and the moon and put them in my hands.

In conclusion, the question as refined and resolved is: If, by doing what is included under Islamic objectives, some people fall a victim to misunderstanding or misdeed, such acts would never be abandoned. Of course, acts which are not included under Islamic objectives - and leaving them off does not compromise or kill any religious objective - then, such acts will be abandoned because of the apprehension that others might fall into misunderstanding or misdeed.

### On Signs and Miracles

The previous verses had mentioned how obstinate people failed to benefit from clear signs of Allah and open miracles of His Messenger and kept on denying the message of truth. The present verses mention how they took a new turn, and demanded particular miracles from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . As reported by Ibn Jarīr, the Quraysh chiefs asked that they be shown the miracle of turning the Mount of Ṣafā into solid gold; if so, they would accept that he was a prophet and messenger, and that they would embrace Islam.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: All right, make a solid agreement that, if this miracle is shown, all of you will become Muslims. They took solemn oaths. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stood up to pray that Allah turns the Mount into gold. Sayyidnā Jibra‘īl came with Waḥy which said: If you wish, We shall make this whole Mount a Mount of gold, but the consequence will be that, according to the customary Divine Law, all of them - if they still fail to believe - shall be destroyed through a mass punishment, as has been happening with past communities who demanded a miracle which was shown, yet they reverted back to denial when the wrath and punishment of Allah over-



took them. Since the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was aware of their habitual obstinacy, and because he was in mercy the foremost, he said that he was not going to pray for that miracle anymore. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed: **وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ** (And they swore by Allah on eloquent oaths - 109). Reported here is the sworn saying of the disbelievers that they would embrace Islam if they can see the miracle demanded by them. After that, in the sentence which follows immediately, it was said: **إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ** (Signs are, definitely, with Allah - 109). This contains an answer to their saying. It has been declared here that all signs and miracles are within the power and control of Allah Ta‘ālā. As for the miracles already manifested, they too were from Him - and those being demanded now, they too lie within His absolute control. But, according to the dictate of reason and justice, they had no right to make such a demand - because, the Holy Prophet ﷺ claims to be a Messenger of Allah, in support of which, he has already presented proofs and evidences in the form of miracles. Now, the other party does have the right to question these proofs and evidences by showing the proofs of their being false. But, the attitude of not cross-examining evidences presented and yet demanding some other evidences would be like the scenario in a law court where the respondent would avoid cross-examining the witness presented by the plaintiff and take the plea that he does not accept the evidence of these witnesses and that he would accept what is said particularly by such and such a person in his statement. Obviously, no court would consider this plea worth hearing.

Similar is the case of the veracity of a prophet or *Rasūl* of Allah. To that end there are many clear signs and miracles before those who disbelieve. Now, unless they prove that these signs and miracles are false, they have no right to say that they would rather like to see a miracle of this or that kind before they could believe.

After that, upto the end of the cited verses, Muslims have been directly instructed that their duty is to stay firm on the true faith in their individual capacity, as well as convey it to others correctly and properly. If they, even then, show signs of rigidness and obstinacy, one should not worry about them because no one has to be forced into becoming a Muslim. If this was what could be done by force, who can

claim to have greater coercive power than Allah Ta'ālā. He Himself would have made everyone a Muslim. And in order to give Muslims their peace of heart, it was also explained in the verse that these people will not believe even if Allah were to show them the miracles of their choice openly and clearly. The reason was that their denial was not based on any misunderstanding or lack of awareness. In fact, it was due to their hostility and obstinacy - a disease which cannot be treated by miracles. In verse 111: *وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَكَةَ*, it has been said that these people, if they were shown all miracles demanded by them, in fact, even if they were made to meet with angels and talk to the dead, they would still not believe. In the two verses that follow (112-113), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted by saying that the hostility of such people against him is nothing surprising. Past prophets too had their enemies - so, let him not be sad about it.

#### Verses 114 - 117

أَفَعَيِّرَ اللَّهُ أَتَّبِعِي حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ  
مُفَصَّلًا وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ  
بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ  
صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَتِهِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١١٥﴾  
وَإِنْ تَطَّعْ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ  
يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ إِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ  
أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾

So, is it someone apart from Allah that I should seek as judge while He has sent down to you the Book with details? And those We have given the Book know that it is something revealed from your Lord with the truth. So, never be one of those who are suspicious. [114]

And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His words, and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [115]

**And if you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. They follow nothing but whims, and they do nothing but make conjectures. [116]**

**Surely, your Lord knows best those who go astray from His way, and He is the best knower of those who are on the right path. [117]**

### Commentary

Mentioned in previous verses was the obstinate attitude of the disbelievers of Makkah against the veracity of the Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم. Despite having seen signs and miracles proving their truth, they remained adamant, event went on to demand miracles of their choice before they could believe. The Qur'an answered this illogical argumentation by saying that the manifestation of miracles they demanded was easy for Allah, but those who were demanding them were obstinate people who would see them yet continue in their wickedness. When they do so, Divine Law will take over, as a result of which, they shall be over-run with mass punishment. That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, in his universal mercy, refused to oblige them. He asked them to ponder over the miracles, signs and proofs they have already seen.

The present verses carry evidences which clearly prove the veracity of the Qur'an and that it is the Divine Word.

The substance of what has been said in the first verse (114) is: The difference between you and me is in the case of my being a prophet and messenger of Allah. I claim it and you deny it. But, this case has already been decided by the Judge of judges in my favour in a way that the miracle of the Qur'an itself is more than sufficient a proof of the truth of my claim. This is the same Qur'an which has challenged the nations of the world to come forward - if they doubt its being the Word of Allah - and make a small *Sūrah* or '*Āyah*' to match this Word. Even the eloquent Arabs failed to meet this challenge. Then, there were those opposing Islam, Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam enblock at the cost of their lives, properties and honour, even not one from among them rose with one single '*Āyah*' which would match the words of the miraculous Qur'an. Was this open miracle not good enough to make

one accept the truth that a total *Ummiyy* who was never taught by anyone was reciting what had left Arabia and the world at large wondering? This is a case already decided in the Court of the Judge of all judges - that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is a true *Rasūl* of Allah and the Qur‘ān is the *Kalām* (Word) of Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhū*.

It was regarding this that it was said in the first verse (114): أَفَغَيَّرَ اللَّهُ (So, is it someone apart from Allah that I should seek as judge). In other words, it means: ‘Do you want that I should, after this decision (of Allah Ta‘ālā to reveal the Qur‘ān to me), go and look for a judge other than Him? This is impossible. Following that - given there are some particular qualities of the Holy Qur‘ān which are by themselves the proof of the Qur‘ān being true and the Word of Allah. For example, it was said: هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا (while He has sent down to you the Book with details) which describes four special perfections of the Qur‘ān, that is: (1) It has been sent down from Allah Ta‘ālā; (2) It is perfect, miraculous, unchallenged and inimitable; (3) All matters of principle have been given in clear details; and (4) Before the Qur‘ān, the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians knew for sure that the Qur‘ān is the true Word of Allah. Then, those who had regard for truth, said so while those who were hostile would not say so despite that they were sure about it.

After the description of these four qualities of the Holy Qur‘ān, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (So, never be one of those who are suspicious). It means that in the presence of such clear proofs, there is no room for doubt. It is obvious that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was never one of those who were in doubt, nor he could be, as confirmed by his saying reported in *Tafsīr* Ibn Kathir: “Neither I ever doubted, nor I ever asked.” This tells us that, though in terms of the words, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ but, in reality, the purpose is to make others hear it. That it has been ascribed to him is a manner in which the aim is to lay emphasis on and heighten the effect of the command - in the sense: ‘when this has been said to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who would have the audacity to entertain any doubt?’

Described in the second verse (115), there are two more distinctive qualities of the Holy Qur‘ān sufficient to prove its being the Divine

Word. It is said: **وَمَنْتَ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَ عَدْلًا ط لَا مَبْدَلَ لِكَلِمَتِهِ** (And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His Word).

The word: **مَنْتَ** (*tammāt*) denotes the state of perfection and: **كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ**. (*kalimatu Rabbik*) refers to the Qur‘ān (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, from Sayyidnā Qatādah). All subjects of the Qur‘ān are of two kinds: (1) Those in which lesson-oriented events and conditions of world history, reward on good deeds and warning of punishment on evil deeds have been described; and (2) those in which injunctions relating to human betterment and prosperity have been laid out. It is about these two kinds that the following two qualities of the Qur‘ān have been identified: **صِدْقًا وَ عَدْلًا**, that is, perfect in truth and justice. Here, **صِدْقٌ** (*ṣidq*:truth) belongs to the first kind. It means that all events, conditions, promises or warnings mentioned in the Qur‘ān are true and correct. There is no possibility of fault or defect or error in them. And: **عَدْلٌ** (*‘adl*:justice) relates to the other kind, that is, the injunctions (*Aḥkām*). It means that all injunctions of Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhū* are based on ‘*Adl* (justice). The sense of ‘*Adl* covers two meanings: (1) Justice under which no injustice has been done to anyone, nor has any right been compromised or usurped; and (2) *‘Itidāl* (moderation), that is, not being totally subordinated to the desires of human self, nor being what ingrained human emotions and natural traits cannot bear. This comes to mean that all Divine injunctions are based on justice and moderation, that is, in them, there is no injustice inflicted on anyone, nor do they have hardship and pain which are humanly unbearable - as said elsewhere: **لَا يَكْتَلِبُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا أَوْسَعَهَا** (Allah does not obligate anyone except to his capacity - 2:286). Then, along with it, by bringing in the word: **مَنْتَ** (*tammāt*:is perfect), it was also pointed out that the Holy Qur‘ān not only has the qualities of truth and justice, but that it is also perfect and complete in them in all respects.

And that all injunctions of the Qur‘ān be - for all peoples of the world, for all generations to come and for all changed conditions - based on both justice and moderation is something which, if considered with a little deliberation, can only be possible in nothing but Divine injunctions. No legislative assembly or congress of the world can completely foresee all forthcoming conditions in the present and the future, nor can it make any law which would accomodate all such

conditions. Every country and nation makes its laws keeping in view what are usually the prevailing conditions of that country or nation. Then, even those laws are made to undergo changes when their experience proves that many of their provisions have remained contrary to justice and moderation. Now, to make a master law for other nations and peoples, or to make it with a complete consideration of all future events - that which embodies in it the qualities of justice and moderation for every nation, every country and every condition - is something beyond human thought and perception. This can only be in the Word of Allah *Subḥānuhu wa Ta‘ālā*. Therefore, this fifth quality of the Holy Qur‘ān, the quality of truth and justice, is impeccable. It demonstrates that all past and present events, promises and warnings, narrated in it are true, wherein the least doubt of their being contrary to the actual cannot be entertained, and that all injunctions given by it are embedded with justice and moderation for the benefit of the whole world for all generations to come right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*, injunctions which inflict no injustice on anyone, nor is there the slightest deviation from the norms of moderation and balance. This is, in itself, the perfect proof of the Qur‘ān being the Divine Word.

The sixth quality has been identified as: *لَا مَبْدَلَ لِكَلِمَةٍ* that is, there is no one who can change the words of Allah Ta‘ālā. One form in which such a change can take place is when someone proves a mistake in it because of which it has to be changed; or, that some enemy changes it forcibly. The Word of Allah is pristinely pure and far beyond any such possibilities. He has Himself promised: *إِنَّا نَعْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَظِيرُونَ* that is, ‘We (only We) have revealed the *Dhikr* (the Qur‘ān) and, for it, We (only We) are the Protector - 15:9). When so, who can dare break through the protection of Allah and make any changes or alterations in it? For that matter, over fourteen hundred years have passed and there have been, in every century and every age, more people who have been against it as compared in numbers, even in power, with those who have been believing it, but not one of them had the courage to introduce one tiny variance in even a vowel point of the Qur‘ān. Of course, possible there was a third form of bringing in a change, that is, it be changed through abrogation (*naskh*) by Allah Ta‘ālā Himself. Therefore, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: “This verse

indicates that the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Last Prophet and the Qur‘ān, the Last Book. After this, there is no probability of an abrogation’ - as it has been elucidated in other verses of the Qur‘ān.

At the end of verse (115), it was said: **وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ** (and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing) which means that Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhū* hears all that is being said by these people and He knows what they do openly and secretly. He will give a return for every deed of theirs in accordance with it.

In the third verse (116), Allah Ta‘ālā tells the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the majority of the progeny of ‘Ādam living on the earth is in error. Let him not be overawed by this situation and let him ignore what they say or do. The Qur‘ān has dealt with this subject at several places. In Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaaffaat, it is said: **وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ** (And truly before them, many of the ancients went astray (37:71) In Sūrah Yūsuf, it is said: **وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ مُؤْمِنِينَ** (And the majority of people - even if you wish - are not to be believers (12:103). The outcome is that the awe of majority customarily overwhelms an individual and he or she ends up following it. Therefore, the address made to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was:

‘And if you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. They follow nothing but whims, and they do nothing but make conjectures.’

The gist of the advice is that he should not be impressed by their numerical majority as a model to follow because they lack principles and go off the right way: At the end of the verse (117), it was said:

‘Surely, your Lord knows best those who go astray from His way, and He is the best knower of those who are on the right path (consequently, as the errants shall be punished, the people of the straight path shall be rewarded).

### Verses 118 - 121

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾  
 وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَاكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ  
 مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرُّرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا لَيُضِلُّونَ

بَاهُوا أَنَّهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَذَرُوا  
 ظَاهِرَ الْأَثَمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ ۖ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْأَثَمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا  
 كَانُوا يَاقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ  
 وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ ۗ وَإِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِيُوحِيَ إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ  
 وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

So, eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked, if you do believe in His verses. [118]

And what can make you not to eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked, while He has spelled out to you all that He has made unlawful for you, except that to which you are compelled by an extreme necessity? And surely, there are many who misguide with their desires without knowledge. Surely, your Lord is the best knower of those who cross the limits. [119]

And leave sin, the outward and the inward. Surely, those who commit sin shall be punished for what they used to commit. [120]

And do not eat that over which the name of Allah has not been pronounced. This is surely a sin. And the satans inspire their friends to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, you would be Mushriks.\* [121]

### Linkage of Verses

Earlier (116), by saying: *وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا* (And if you obey), following people in error was prohibited absolutely. Onward from there, comes the prohibition of such following in a particular matter as necessiated by an event. That event pertains to the lawfulness of what has been slaughtered properly or improperly. The event is that disbelievers tried to put Muslims in doubt by commenting that they did not eat of the ani-

\* *Mushrik*: one who ascribes partners to Allah.



mals killed by Allah (i.e. by natural death) while they had no problem with eating of what they killed (slaughtered) themselves (as deduced by Abū Dāwūd and al-Ḥākim from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās). Some Muslims reported this doubt before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Thereupon, these verses ending at: لَمْ يَشْرِكُونْ (121) were revealed (narrated by Abū Dāwūd and Al-Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās as in Al-Lubāb).

The gist of the answer given is: You are Muslims. You observe the injunctions of Allah particularly - and Allah has told you all about the Ḥalāl and the Ḥarām. So, keep abiding by it. Do not entertain any doubts about something Ḥalāl being Ḥarām, and something Ḥarām, being Ḥalāl. As for the scruples of disbelievers, just pay no attention to them.

The substantiation of this answer is that rational proofs are required only to prove the basic principles of faith (like Oneness of Allah, the prophethood of His messengers etc.) but once these basic principles are established and admitted, rational arguments are no more required for establishing a subsidiary or consequential rule of the Shari‘ah. What is required is to prove that this rule is based on a specific order given by Allah or His messenger. Once it is established that the rule is based on a specific injunction imposed by Allah Ta‘ālā or His messenger, it cannot be called in question on the basis of rational arguments. (because after admitting that the rule is prescribed by Allah Who is all-Wise, all-Powerful, it will always be based on wisdom which might be unknown to us.) Rather, it is sometimes harmful to mention rational wisdom for the rules of Shari‘ah, because any wisdom given by one's conjectures will always remain subject to doubts on the basis of counter arguments, and there is no way to find out a certain and absolute wisdom for a subsidiary rule of Shari‘ah. However, if it is evident that a person wants to know the wisdom behind a rule of Shari‘ah only to seek truth and to satisfy himself, there is no harm in mentioning some possible reasons of a rule before him as a matter of additional knowledge. But in the event that the rational wisdom is asked only for the sake of confrontation, then the proper way for a Muslim should be to ignore such questions and to act according to the prescribed rules without paying attention to the critic. It is true that if

a person wants to prove that a subsidiary rule of Shari'ah is repugnant to an absolute principle established by reason, the point raised by him may deserve answer, but the question raised by the *mushriks* in the present case was not of this nature in any way. Therefore, the Muslims are directed to ignore such absurd questions and keep believing and acting as before.

It is on the basis of the aforesaid principles that the question of Mushriks has not been answered in express terms. However, the expression used has given a subtle indication to the difference between a carrion and an animal slaughtered properly. The text gives permission to eat an animal on which Allah's name is invoked (كُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِّرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ). It is obvious that Allah's name is invoked on an animal while slaughtering it, therefore, it implies the condition of slaughtering an animal which drains out impure blood from the animal. On the other hand, it is forbidden to eat of an animal on which Allah's name is not invoked (وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذَكَّرْ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ). Not invoking Allah's name may happen in two different situations: (1) Not slaughtering an animal at all (2) slaughtering an animal without invoking Allah's name. Both these situations render the animal *Ḥarām* according to this verse. Obviously, an animal which dies its natural death is covered under the first situation where its impure blood was not drained out and remaining in the body rendered it impure. That is why it has been held as *Ḥarām*.

### Commentary

The Qur'anic order of reciting the name of Allah implied مَا ذُكِّرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ (that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked) includes both kinds of slaughter termed in Islamic Fiqh as "*al-dhabḥ-al-ikhtiyāriyy*" (slaughtering an animal under control) and "*al-dhabḥ-al-idtirāriyy*" (hunting an animal out of control with an arrow or a hunting dog or falcon). The name of Allah shall be recited in the latter case when releasing the arrow or the dog or falcon.

Similarly, the words "مَا ذُكِّرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ" include reciting actually or as implied. That is why Imam Abu Hanifah has allowed to eat an animal upon which the reciting of the name of Allah was missed inadvertently. However if it is missed deliberately, it will render the animal *Ḥarām*.

## Verse 122

أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي  
النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ۗ كَذَلِكَ  
زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him a light with which he walks among men, (is held to) be like the one whose condition is such that he is in total darkness, never coming out of it? This is how their deeds appear beautified to the disbelievers. [122]

## Commentary

In the previous verses, mentioned there was the demand of ever new miracles by disbelievers as proof of their sheer obstinacy as they had already witnessed the open miracle of the Qur‘ān itself. After that, the Qur‘ān argued that the miracles already before their eyes should have been enough to lead them to the true path, only if these people themselves would have been genuinely seeking truth. Then, came the description of these miracles.

The present verse employs a similitude to focus on two life-styles in a tight frame. On one side is the state of those who believe in the Qur‘ān and in the Prophet of Islam, may he be blessed and protected by Allah Ta‘ālā. Then, on the other side, there is the state of those who refuse to believe in them. Also stated through it is the good or bad end of both, as well as, the reality of what a believer or disbeliever stands for, and what belief and disbelief actually are. A believer is like one alive and the disbeliever is like one who is dead. Belief or *‘Imān* is like light - and Disbelief or *Kufr* is like darkness. These are Qur‘ānic similitudes. They are no poetry. They are a statement of reality.

**Believer is Alive; Disbeliever, dead.**

In this similitude, a *Mu‘min*, a true believer has been identified as alive while a *Kāfir*, a disbeliever, has been pointed to as dead. The reason is that kinds and forms of life in human beings, animals and vegetation differ, but this much no sensible person can deny that every life form is there for a specific purpose. And nature has endowed it with

full ability to achieve this purpose. This is what the Qur‘ān is saying in: *أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَلْفَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى* (Our Lord gave everything its creation, then guided it - 20:50), that is: Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhū* created everything in the universe and gave it full instructions to achieve the purpose for which it was created. It is under this arrangement that all created beings are pursuing the mission assigned to them. In this eco-system, land, water, air and fire, and the moon, the sun and the stars are all aware of their duties and are fulfilling it. And this act of fulfilling their duties is a proof of life in all those things. And when one of these, whatever the condition or time, stops fulfilling its duties, then, it is no more alive; it is dead. If water stops its function of quenching thirst and removing impurities, it will not remain water anymore. If fire stops igniting and burning, it will not be the fire it was anymore. Trees and vegetation, once they stop growing and bearing flowers and fruits, will not be the trees and vegetation as they are - because they have abandoned the purpose of their life, as a result of which, they became lifeless, like the dead.

After looking at the universe around him bit by bit, anyone with the least fund of reason and understanding with him is bound to ponder about questions such as: What is the purpose of human life? What is one supposed to do as duty? Now, if one is fulfilling the purpose of one’s life, one is entitled to be taken as alive - and whoever is not fulfilling the purpose of one’s life, he or she is no better than a dead body.

What is the purpose of human life and what are the duties human beings have to fulfill? The question needs thought and - an answer. According to the principle stated above, it has already been determined that one who is fulfilling the purpose of his or her life is alive, otherwise, is dead. Now there are sightless tyrants among human beings who would take their species as self-rising vegetation or some kind of smart animal, with whom there is no distinction between a human being and a donkey or dog. According to them, the sole purpose of life is to fulfill the desire of one’s self, to eat, drink, sleep, wake up, and then die. So, reasonable people anywhere in the world would not take them as their addressees. People of reason and understanding, no matter what their religion, community or school of thought, have all along the lanes of time been in agreement that human beings are the superior-

most in creation and that the universe has been made and put into their service. It is obvious that what is most superior has to have a purpose of life which is matchingly superior. Every discerning person knows that there is no difference between human beings and animals as far as eating, drinking, sleeping and waking, finding and holding a shelter, dressing and wearing is concerned - in fact, many animals eat better and eat more than them, are even dressed better in standard natural attires. They even live in better surroundings with lots of fresh air. As for knowing their gain and loss, there too, every animal, even every tree, has awareness to limits suited to it. They have the ability to acquire the beneficial and stay away from the harmful. Similarly, when it comes to being beneficial to others, all animals and the vegetation seem to be obviously way ahead of human beings in that their flesh, skin, bone, ligaments, and of trees, including all they have in between their roots to the tiniest leaves, almost everything is harnessed into the service of man, yielding countless benefits to produce things needed in life. It is interesting that quite contrary to this, there is man whose flesh is of no use to anyone, nor is his skin, or hair, or bone or ligaments.

Now worth finding out is how does Monseigneur Humane (Mr. Man, the *homo sapiens*), under these circumstances, stand to deserve being the served one in this universe and being the cream of creation as much heralded? This brings us closer to the destination of truth. A little reflection will reveal that the reach of reason and consciousness given to all these units of creation is limited to the transitory and accidental gain or loss - and it is in this life, it appears beneficial for others. What was there before the life on this earth and what will be coming after is a field in which the reason and consciousness of nothing organic or inorganic, not even that of the smartest of animals, would work, nor can anything there serve as functional or beneficial in this particular field. So, this is the field in which human beings have to work, human beings for whom the universe has been commissioned to serve, and human beings who are the most superior of all creation. Only this will bring out the difference between the distinct status of human beings as compared with other elements of creation clearly and conclusively.

What we now know is that the purpose of human beings on this earth is to keep in sight the beginning and the end of this universe, to assess what it entails as a result, to determine what is collectively beneficial or harmful, then use the insight so gained to acquire the beneficial and abstain from the harmful, and also invite others towards the beneficial and take measures to shield them from the harmful - so that the dream of a life of lasting peace and tranquility can be fulfilled. Now that it is settled that the purpose of human life is to acquire this standard benefit issuing forth from human perfection individually and collectively, enriching one's own self and at the same time enriching others. This realization helps us see the similitude of the Holy Qur'ān we have been talking about in the form of a reality - that alive is one who puts his or her faith in Allah Ta'ālā and in His *Rasūl* صلى الله عليه وسلم, and in between his or her view of the beginning and end of life, recognizes his collective gain and loss in the light of Divine Revelation, because human reason alone has never triumphed over this field, nor it can. And when we know that, in terms of the fulfillment of the purpose of life, the person alive is the person who follows the Divine Revelation and is a believer, then we also come to the definite conclusion that whoever does not do that deserves to be called dead. Maulanā Rūmī has put it so delightfully:

زندگی از بهر طاعت بندگی است      بے عبادت زندگی شرمندگی ست  
 آدمیت لحم و شحم و پوست نیست      آدمیت جز رضائے دوست نیست

Life is to obey and serve

Life without devotion is a shame

Man's reality is not flesh, fat and skin

Man's reality is but the pleasure of the Friend!

This was the first similitude of the Qur'ān, that of a believer and a disbeliever, where believers have been likened to the living and the disbelievers to the dead. The second similitude is that of 'Imān (faith) and *Kufr* (disbelief) which have been placed in juxtaposition to light and darkness.

### Faith is Light and Disbelief, Darkness

In this verse, 'Imān (faith) has been called *Nūr* (light) and *Kufr* (disbelief) has been equated with *Zulmah* (darkness). A little thought

will show that this similitude is not imaginary. It is a statement of fact. As we looked for the real purpose of things earlier, we can do the same here by finding out the justification for the existence of light and darkness. The purpose of light is to be able to see things far and near with its help, as a result of which, one has the advantage of staying away from the harmful and the opportunity of acquiring what is beneficial.

Let us now look at ‘*Īmān*. This is a light which surrounds everything in the heavens and the earth. It is this light alone which can show the end of the universal system as well as the correct consequences of everything done. Whoever has this light by his side, he can not only save himself from the consequences of everything harmful and injurious, but can also help others to stay safe from them. But, one who does not have access to this light remains in the dark. He has no panoramic view. He cannot see life as a whole, neither beginning, nor end. He cannot distinguish between what is beneficial and what is not. At best what he can do is to grope around and use his sense of touch to figure out what they are, at least to some extent. The life of this world as we know it is just about the environment most of us usually live in and around. The disbeliever thus does find out the life around him and the benefit and loss it has to offer within that limited framework. But, he has no idea or awareness of what lies ahead in the eternal life to come later, nor can he comprehend how beneficial or harmful it can be for him. This subject has been further explained by the Qur‘ān in Sūrah Ar-Rūm:

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُونَ

They know the obvious from the present life of the world while, about the life-to-come (*‘Ākhirah*), they are (totally) heedless - 30:7).

In a verse of Sūrah Al-‘Ankabūt, after the description of past communities given to denial and disbelief, the Qur‘ān says: وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ (though they were men of sight - 29:38). It means that these people who had dismissed this matter of *‘Ākhirah* demonstrating rank heedlessness and seeming lack of foresight were really not that dense when it came to their matters in worldly life. In fact, they were “*mustabshirīn*” - keen-sighted, enlightened people. But, this enlightenment of theirs

was outwardly-oriented, of the surface, of the mundane, which could only serve them well to enrich what revolved round their transitory life in this world. However, for the eternal life of 'Ākhirah, the life-to-come, this was not to work.

After hearing these details, please recite the present verse of the Qur‘ān once again: *أَوْمَرُكُمْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ تَمَلَّأُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا* It means that one who was dead earlier, that is, was a disbeliever, then, Allah raised him back to life, that is, gave him the *taufiq* to become a Muslim - and then, He gave him a light, that is, 'Imān or faith, with which he moves about among people. Now can this person be equal to one who is surrounded by all sorts of darkness, out of which, he cannot get out, that is, is groping in the darkness of disbelief, does not himself know what is good or bad for him, and there is no way he can ward off his destruction. If so, how can he bring any benefit to others?

### The Light of Faith Brings Benefits for Others Too

In this verse, by saying: *نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ* (light with which he walks among men), the instruction given was that the light of faith is not restricted to a mosque (*masjid*), spiritual seminary (*khanqāh*) or a modest roomette secluded for reflection and remembrance (*hujrah*). Whoever is blessed with this light by Allah Ta‘ālā, he carries it with him everywhere he goes through the lives of people on the streets and in the homes. Everywhere he is, he himself benefits from the light and lets others too benefit by it. Light is light and cannot be suppressed by any darkness. Even a tiny flickering lamp does not easily give up under the weight of surrounding darkness, though the light it emits does not go very far. When light is strong, it spreads over a larger area. When light is dim, it lightens a smaller area. But light is light. It subdues darkness after all - darkness does not subdue light. Light is not light if it surrenders to darkness. Similarly, an 'Imān which surrenders to *Kufr*, or is scared by it, is no 'Imān. This light of 'Imān, this light of faith is there with its bearer in all walks of life, under all conditions and in every age.

In this similitude, there is yet another hint that light is after all universally beneficial. Every human being and every animal benefits by it, intentionally, or without intention, more or less. Let us suppose



that a person who has the light but does not wish to let the other person benefit from it, nor the other person has come out to seek the benefit of his light, but the very fact that someone is walking with light by his side is bound to spread out its benefit to others naturally, rather compulsively. This is what happens with the *’Imān* of a true Muslim. It does make its benefit shower on others too, in some degree, whether or not the receivers realize it. At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (This is how their deeds appear beautified to the disbelievers). It means that the disbelievers and deniers of truth who do not accept proofs which are open and clear do so because everyone has a craze of his own which keeps him pleased with himself. There is the ever-present Sahyṭān, and no less is the retinue of one’s desires, whims and fancies which present before the eyes of such people a mosaic of their evil deeds which they start seeing as nice and beautiful. Calling it a deception is an understatement. May Allah keep all of us protected from it.

#### Verses 123 - 125

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكْبَرًا مُجْرِمِيهَا لِيَمْكُرُوا فِيهَا  
 وَمَا يَمْكُرُونَ إِلَّا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَإِذَا  
 جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ حَتَّى نُؤْتَىٰ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ رُسُلُ  
 اللَّهِ ۗ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ ۗ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا  
 صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۖ بِمَا كَانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾  
 فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ  
 يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَمَّا كَانُوا ۗ يَصْعَدُ فِي السَّمَاءِ  
 كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

And in a similar way, We have made in every town its chief sinners so that they commit mischief in it. And they do not commit mischief but against themselves, and they do not realize. [123]

And when a sign comes to them, they say, “We shall never come to believe unless we are given the like of what was given to the messengers of Allah. Allah

**knows best where to place His message. Those who committed sin shall soon suffer from disgrace before Allah and face severe punishment for the mischief they have been making. [124]**

**So, whom Allah wills to give guidance, He opens his heart for Islam, and whom He wills to go astray, He makes his heart narrow, much too narrow, as though he climbs up to the sky. In this way, Allah brings ignominy over those who do not believe. [125]**

### **Commentary**

Mentioned in the previous verse was that this world is a place of trial. Good deeds here are tied with some effort. This is a way laid out with hurdles. The same is true about evil deeds. They come with a web of deception laced with unending desires and their short-lived gratifications, a way of living which makes these evil deeds look good in the sight of human beings who are unaware of their reality and heedless to their ultimate end. Such is their pull that the smartest of the smart in this world would not hesitate to jump into the bandwagon.

In the first (123) of the present verses, it is said that this trial can be seen as an ongoing spectacle of life since the beginning of the universe of our existence. Usually, it is the big people of a community, the rich, the influential, the holders of clout and access who, when they get used to the taste of money, power and recognition, start committing crimes in one or the other form, never bothering to reflect on the ultimate end of what they were doing. As for the common people, they become accustomed to following the example set by these big people. They copy them with the conviction that it is good for them and that they are on the obvious road to success. In contrast, there are the blessed prophets and their deputies charged with learning, teaching and preaching. They try to stop people from their evil deeds and warn them of the consequences of what they were doing. Then, these big people open a front of hostility and conspiracy against them, which is obviously to harass or harm these pious souls, but in the ultimate analysis, the curse of what they do against them recoils back on them alone. And this can happen to them even within their life in the present world.

In this statement of guidance, Muslims have been warned against

aspiring to be like the big, the rich, the wealthy of the world. They should leave the habit of looking at them as role-models and stop following them mob-like. For them, the ideal is that they should make a habit of seeing everything in perspective making sure that they are aware of the final end of their deeds, and that they should themselves learn to figure out as to what is good or bad for them.

In addition to that, the purpose here is to comfort the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he has been asked not to grieve about the hostility of the chiefs of Quraysh, for it was nothing new. Prophets in the past had also faced such people. But, in the end, they were disgraced and the word of Allah reigned supreme.

In the second verse (124), mentioned there is a conversation relating to the same chiefs of the Quraysh. What they said was a combination of verbal belligerence, sarcasm and mockery. It was answered.

Imām al-Baghawī reports from Sayyidnā Qatādah that Abū Jahl, the big chief of the tribe of Quraysh once said: We have confronted Banū ‘Abd Munāf (that is, the family of the Holy Prophet ﷺ) on every front and we have never been behind them. But, now they say: ‘you cannot match us in nobility and spiritual greatness because we have a prophet in our family who receives revelation from Allah Ta‘ālā.’ Then he said: I swear by Allah that we will never follow them unless we too start receiving the kind of revelation he receives. The statement: *وَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ حَتَّى نُؤْتَىٰ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ رُسُلُ اللَّهِ* (And when a sign comes to them, they say, “We shall never come to believe unless we are given the like of what was given to the messengers of Allah) at the end of the verse means exactly this.

**Prophets and Messengers are appointed by Allah:**

**This Office cannot be acquired or appropriated:**

After having reported the statement quoted above, the Qur‘ān answers it by saying: *اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ* (Allah knows best where to place his message). It means that the person making this remark thinks in His ignorance that the station of a prophet and messenger can be acquired on the basis of family nobility, tribal authority and wealth while prophethood is the office of the Vice Regency (*Khilāfah*) of Allah the acquisition of which is in no one’s control. No matter how many excellences and perfections one has acquired for himself, still no one can

- through his discretion or control or power of achievement - succeed in acquiring the office and station of prophethood and messengership. That is purely a blessing of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. He bestows it on whomsoever He wills.

This proves that prophethood and messengership are not controlled by human beings. They are not what can be acquired by intellectual perfection or pragmatic excellence or utmost striving or consuming devotion. Even a *waliyy* or saint, no matter how high he may soar in his spiritual station, cannot acquire it. That is nothing but Divine grace as it is given only to particular servants of Allah as dictated by Divine knowledge and wisdom. However, it is necessary that whoever is chosen to occupy this station and office, in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, is identified right from the beginning when he is created with appropriate inherent ability and then he is specially groomed in his morals and deeds.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ (Those who committed sin shall soon suffer from disgrace before Allah and face severe punishment for the mischief they have been making). Here, the word: صَغَارٌ (*ṣaghār*) is a verbal noun which means disgrace. The sentence means that these antagonists of truth who are known to be the big chiefs of their people will see their pride and prestige rolling in dust. Disgrace is coming; so is punishment - and both are grim. That can be within the life of the present world, and in the 'Ākhirah as well - as has been the fate of the oppressors of the prophets in the past who were put to disgrace in the present world as well. The topmost antagonists of our own Prophet, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, who boasted about their prestige, either entered the fold of Islam or, as was the case with those who did not, were destroyed in disgrace. What happened to the legendary chiefs of Quraysh, Abū Jahl and Abū Lahb, became a lesson when the Conquest of Makkah broke their backs.

### Signs of 'Sharḥ al-Ṣadr' in Dīn

Some signs of the Divinely-guided, and the firm on error, have been given in the third verse (125). Said there was: فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ (So, whom Allah wills to give guidance, He opens his heart for Islam).

Hākim in al-Mustadrak and Baihaqī in Shu‘ab al-Īmān report from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه: When this verse was revealed, the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم requested him to explain the meaning of *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*, the opening of the heart for Islam. He said: ‘Allah Ta‘ālā puts a light in the heart of a believer through which his heart opens up for the perception, understanding and acceptance of truth. The *Ṣaḥābah* submitted: ‘Is there a sign which will help recognize the person who has such *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*? He said: ‘Yes. The sign is that *‘Ākhirah* and its blessings become the object of all his desires. He avoids uncalled-for desires and fleeting enjoyments and starts getting ready for death before it comes.’

After that, he said: “ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّمَا يَصَّعْدُ فِي السَّمَاءِ ” (and whom He wills to let go astray, He makes his heart narrow, much too narrow [wherefore, for him to accept the truth and to act in accordance with it becomes as difficult], as though he climbs up to the sky).

Kalabi has said: ‘the narrowing of his heart means that no passage for the entry of truth and good remains open there.’ A similar explanation has also been reported from Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā‘zam رضى الله عنه and Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه has said: ‘When he hears the *Dhikr* of Allah, he feels being harassed and when he listens to what is *Kufr* and *Shirk*, his heart relishes it.’

### The Noble *Ṣaḥābah*: Ever-Eager Receivers of Truth

This was the reason why the noble *Ṣaḥābah*, may Allah be pleased with all of them, who were chosen by Allah Ta‘ālā to be His Prophet’s companions in faith, and to be the learners and carriers of his teachings as his direct disciples. They were so convinced as his adherents that their doubts about Islamic injunctions, if any, remained negligibly low. During their whole lifetime, the number of questions presented before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by them are but a counted few. The reason was that by the grace of the company of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم their hearts were almost engraved with love and reverence for Allah Ta‘ālā and because of which they were blessed with the high station of *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*, a heart open to the acceptance of truth. In fact, their hearts had become in themselves the very standard of truth and falsehood. They would accept truth promptly and falsehood could not find entry into their hearts. After that, as the distance from

the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم increased, doubts and scruples started finding room for infiltration and that was the beginning of dogmatic differences.

### To Remove Doubts : Open Hearts, Narrow Debates

In our day, the world is a stage infested with doubts. People seek solutions through debates, arguments and counter-arguments and end up with confusion worse confounded. This is not a sound way to handle doubts as pointed out by the unique Indian poet, Akbar Ilāhābādī:

فلسفی کو بحث کے اندر خدا ملتا نہیں      ڈور کو سلجھا رہا ہے پر سرا ملتا نہیں

The philosopher deep in debate cannot find God  
He is untangling the string but cannot find where to begin!

There is only one way out, that which was taken by the blessed Companions and by the early righteous elders: Think of the perfect power of Allah Ta‘ālā and imagine His blessings and feel the presence of His love and reverence, the doubts evaporate automatically. This is the reason why the Qur‘ān has itself prompted the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to make the following *Du‘ā* (prayer):

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي  
*Rabbishrah li sadri*

O my Rabb, open my heart.

At the end of the verse it was said: كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ which means that this is how Allah brings damnation and disgrace upon those who do not believe. For truth, their hearts are not open while to every evil they dash.

### Verses 126 - 128

وَهَذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيمًا ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ  
﴿١٢٦﴾ لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلَامِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا  
يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۗ يَمْعَشِرَ الْجِنَّ قَدْ  
اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ ۗ وَقَالَ أَوْلِيَّتُهُم مِّنَ الْإِنسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ  
بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَوَلَّغْنَا أَلْبَابَنَا الَّذِي أَجَلَّتْ لَنَا ۗ قَالَ النَّارُ

مَثُوكُمْ خُلْدَيْنَ فِيهَا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ

﴿١٢٨﴾

And this is the path of your Lord, a straight path. We have made the verses elaborate for people who accept the advice. [126] For them there is the Abode of Peace with their Lord, and He is their Guardian by virtue of what they used to do. [127]

And the day He gathers all of them together: “O Jinn-kind, you have done too much against mankind.” And their friends from among the human beings will say, “Our Lord, some of us have benefitted from some others, and we have reached our term You had appointed for us.” He will say, “The Fire is your Abode where you will remain for ever, except what Allah wills. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing.” [128]

### Commentary

In the first (126) of the three verses appearing here, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and it has been said: *وَهَذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيمًا* (And this is the path of your Lord, a straight path). Here, as said by Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه, the word: *هذا* (*hādha*:this) refers to the Qur‘ān, and as said by Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه, it means Islam (Ruh al-Ma‘ānī). The sense of the sentence is: This Way is the Way of your Lord, that is, this is a Way which has been proposed by your Lord in His infinite Wisdom, and with Him it finds favour. Here, by attributing the Way to the Lord of all, it has been indicated that the working system of Qur‘ān and Islam given to him was not for the benefit of Allah Ta‘ālā, rather, it was for the benefit of those who would act in accordance with it. This is as required by His being the *Rabb*, the Supreme Nurturer. Through this Way, the purpose is to nurture, train and groom human beings in a manner which would guarantee their eternal well-being.

Then, by bringing in the word: *رب* (*Rabb*:Lord) in a state of attribution to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, that is: *ربك* (*Rabbik*:your Lord), the impression of a special kindness towards him has been released - that: ‘your’ Lord has proposed this Way. The delicacy of this attribu-

tion can be readily felt by people of taste. Think of a servant of Allah. If he ever happens to find his person placed in even the minor-most frame of reference to his *Rabb* and *Ma‘būd*, his Lord and the object of his worship and devotion, that would be, for him, the highest possible achievement. And now, if the Lord of lords, the One worship-worthy entity in this whole universe, were to attribute His pristine Person to him and say, “I am yours,” what remains there for him to say anything anymore about his wonderful ‘kismet!’

After that, the ‘existing identity’ of this Qur’ānic Way has been explained through the word: *مُسْتَقِيمٌ* (*mustaqīm*), that is, this path is the straight path. Here too, rather than have ‘*mustaqīm*’ (straight) as the adjective of ‘*ṣirāt*’ (path), it has been placed as an adverb which indicates that the Way has been proposed by the Lord of the universe, and in this, any probability, other than its being straight, just cannot exist. (Ruḥ al-Ma‘ānī and Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The text then says: *كَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ* (We have made the verses elaborate for people who accept the advice).

The word: *فَصَّلْنَا* (*Faṣṣalnā*: We have made elaborate) is from: *تَفْصِيلٌ* (*tafṣīl*) which basically means to describe a subject by analysing it unit by unit. This way comprehending the subject becomes easy. Therefore, the outcome of *tafṣīl* is to explain explicitly. So, the sense comes to be: ‘We have stated matters of principle explicitly and in details in which there remains no brevity or ambiguity.’ After that, by saying: *لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ* (for people who accept the advice), it was pointed out that, though these statements of the Qur’ān are clear, but benefit from them has been derived only by those who ponder over the Qur’ān to seek good counsel honestly, that is, doggedness, inherent resistance, opinionatedness, a priori hostility or the barriers of blind adherence to or following of ancestral customs do not come in between as walls.

In the second verse (127), it was said: *لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلَامِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ* (For them there is the Abode of Peace with their Lord). It means that the people who have been mentioned above, people who see and hear the Qur’ānic words of advice with an open mind and who, as an inevitable result, accept the advice and guidance, then, it is for them that there is that reward of *Dārus-Salām*, present and preserved, waiting. Here, the



word: دَارٌ (*dār*) means home or abode and: سَلَامٌ (*salām*) means peace and security from all calamities, catastrophies and hardships. Therefore, *Dārus-Salām* can be the description of a home where none of these, or sorrow or pain of any kind, can find entry. And that, as obvious, could only be Paradise.

And Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه said: *Salām* is the name of Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhu*. And the *Dār* of *As-Salām* means the ‘*Dār*’ (home, house or abode) of Allah. It is evident that the abode of Allah is a place of peace. Therefore, the meaning essentially remains the same, that is, a home where total and all-inclusive peace reigns. By calling *Jannah* (Paradise) *Dārus-Salām*, the indication given is that *Jannah* alone is the place where one sheds off all pain, anxiety and distaste, and enjoys total bliss, something never acquired by the highest of the high in this mortal world, nor even by the greatest of the great prophets or messengers - because this state of life in the mortal world is not the proper locale of perfect and eternal peace and pleasure.

It has been stated in this verse that, for those who have the good fortune of accepting the advice, there is ‘*Dārus-Salām*’ with their Lord. Now, the expression - ‘with their Lord’ - could also mean that this ‘*Dārus-Salām*’ cannot be cashed instantly here in the mortal world, rather, they will get it when they go to their Lord on the Day of *Qiyāmah*. And it could also mean that the promise of ‘*Dārus-Salām*’ cannot be false. The most gracious *Rabb* is its guarantor. It lies safe with Him. Then, right here, there is yet another indication towards the fact that no one can ever imagine the blessings of this ‘*Dārus-Salām*’ within the limitations of this frame of existence. Only the *Rabb*, with whom lies this treasure, knows it.

Moreover, in the light of the second meaning given above, the actual getting of this ‘*Dārus-Salām*’ does not seem to hinge upon the coming of *Qiyāmah* (The Last Day) and ‘*Ākhirah*’ (Hereafter). In fact, it is also possible that the most gracious *Rabb* would make anyone He wills its fortunate recipient within the life of this world - whether by making them totally immune to and protected against all calamities and hardships, as has been the case in some examples of past prophets and men of Allah, or, by making the blessings of the ‘*Ākhirah*’ appear before

their eyes with a touch of the real, their very eyes were attuned to the real thing in a manner that it helped them perceive the pains of the transitory world as something insignificant and not worthy of much notice. For such people, even stockpiles of suffering are reduced to a blade of grass.

That the forthcoming rewards to be received as against the hardships of the mortal world would make them welcome these hardships as something delectable is not a proposition too far out. Think of the eternal blessings of the 'Ākhirah. They are certainly great as they can be. Then, think of the fleeting comforts of this mortal world. Their very thought thrills. Man slaves for them, yet takes his slavery with a smile and a sigh of relief. Man sacrifices the bliss of his freedom and exchanges it with worldly comforts through recommendations and bribes, goes for the hard labour of job or work which cuts through his sleep and rest, even does it with zest and enthusiasm, and then, is happy and grateful about it - because he sees before his eyes the passage of thirty one days of the month which will bring to him the taste and pleasure of the salary he has earned. That pleasure makes every bitterness of this slavery in work tasteful and pleasing. According to one of the possible explanations (Tafsīr) of the Qur'ānic verse: *وَلِمَن خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ جَنَّاتٌ*, those who fear Allah Ta'ālā shall have two Paradises, the one in the 'Ākhirah and the other in the mortal world. To begin with, Paradise in the world means that one finds the help of Allah with him in everything he does. What he does seems to be becoming easy for him - and, even if he has to face a passing phase of difficulty, extra-effort, or even failure, that appears welcome to him in anticipation of the lasting blessings of the 'Ākhirah, something which turns even this painful experience into a state of comfort.

To sum up, it can be said that the reference in this verse, of 'Dārus-Salām' for good people being with their *Rabb*, is a promise which is certain and determined for the *Akhirah*, and it is also possible that they may be given a taste of the 'Dārus-Salām' in this world as well.

At the conclusion of the verse (127), it was said: *وَهُوَ وَرَبُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ* (and He is their Guardian by virtue of what they used to do). It means that, because of their good deeds, Allah Ta'ālā becomes their guardian, care-taker and helper. Everything hard they face becomes easy on



pliable people to listen to them because of which they succeeded in making human beings follow their dictates, so much so that they forgot all about death and the Hereafter. That was when they confessed that they had forsaken the thought of death and the Hereafter because of the instigation of satans, and now they see it in front of them. Thereupon, Allah Ta‘ālā will say: النَّارُ مَثْوَاكُمْ خُلِدِينَ فِيهَا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ (“The Fire is your abode where you shall remain for ever, except what Allah wills [that is, wills to take someone out of it]. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing”). But, as in the definitive statements of the Qur‘ān (*Nuṣūṣ*), it stands proved that even Allah Ta‘ālā would not so will, therefore, it is for ever that they shall have to be in it.

### Verses 129 - 132

وَكَذَلِكَ نُؤَلِّى بَعْضَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾  
يَمْعَشِرَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا شَهِدْنَا  
عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِنَا وَغَرَّبْنَاهُمُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ  
أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كٰفِرِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ ذَلِكَ أَن لَّمْ يَكُنْ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى  
بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا غٰفِلُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَةٍ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا وَمَا  
رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

And thus We set some wrongdoers on some others because of what they used to commit. [129]

“O Jinnkind and mankind, have there not come to you the messengers from among you who used to narrate My verses to you, and used to warn you of your meeting this day?” They will say, “We testify against ourselves.” And the worldly life had deceived them, and they testified against themselves that they were disbelievers. [130]

And this is because your Lord is not to destroy any towns for any injustice while their people are unaware.

**And for all there are ranks according to what they did,  
and your Lord is not unaware of what they do. [132]**

### Commentary

Lexically, the word: *نُوَلِّي* (*nuwallī*) appearing in the first (129) of the three verses cited above can be translated either in the sense of joining up and bringing closer, or in the sense of setting on or imposing on. Narrations reported from leading authorities in *Tafsīr* among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi‘īn also carry the explanation of this word as based on these two meanings.

### The Basis of Human Groupings after Resurrection

Early authorities Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr and Qatādah and others have taken the first sense and, according to them, the verse means that, on the day of *Qiyāmah* before Allah Ta‘ālā, the collective formations - that is, groupings and party alignments of people - will not be on racial or national or colour and language basis, instead of which, these groupings shall be on the basis of deeds and morals. A Muslim obedient to Allah Ta‘ālā, wherever he may be, shall be together with Muslims; and the disobedient disbeliever, wherever he may be, shall be together with disbelievers - whether their race, heredity, country, language, colour and social living may be way different.

Then, even among Muslims, those good in deeds shall be with the righteous while the evil doers will be grouped up with evil doers and sinners. This is the sense of what has been said in Sūrah At-Takwīr: *وَأَنزَلْنَا السُّفُوفَ رُوحًا* that is, when people shall be grouped (like with like) the sense of which is that the people gathered before Allah Ta‘ālā on the plains of Resurrection shall split in different groupings in terms of their deeds and morals.

In his *Tafsīr* of this verse, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā‘zam has said: ‘The doers of one kind of deeds, good or bad, shall be grouped together. The good will go with the good to *Jannah* and the evil will be led with the evil to *Jahannam*.’ To authenticate his explanation, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā‘zam cited proof from the verse: *أَخْتَرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ* of the Holy Qur‘ān (37:22) which deals with the same subject by saying that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, the command will go forth: ‘Gather those who have been unjust, and their cohorts, (and take them to *Jahannam*).

The gist of the explanation of this verse is that Allah Ta‘ālā will, by merging some of the unjust with some others, will make them one group, irrespective of how far apart they may be from each other in terms of their race and homeland.

In addition to what has been stated above, it has also been clarified in another verse that, on the fateful day of Resurrection, the temporal grouping based on race, country, colour, language and other unifiers will break up root and branch: *وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُورَثُهُ بُنْيَانُهُ وَيَتَفَرَّقُ قَوْمٌ*. It means: When the Hour (of *Qiyāmah*) is established, those united shall stand separated - 30:14).

### **Deeds and Morals affect Collective Matters even in this World**

As for the severance of existing relations and affiliations, that is something which will come before everyone fully and clearly after all, but a minor sampling of this can be found everywhere in this mortal world as well. It goes without saying that a good person is temperamentally tuned to virtues and virtuous people. He is attached to them individually or collectively. This becomes his passport to ever-new avenues of good deeds which go on to make his determination firm. The same holds for doers of evil deeds. They too relate to their kind; to them they are attached and with them they keep company. And this negative company keeps contributing to their evil deeds and evil morals, as a result of which, avenues of good and prospects of better conduct keep closing on him before his own eyes. This is his cash punishment for his evil deeds which he gets right here in this world.

So, in a nutshell, we can say that there is a reward or punishment of good or bad deeds which will come in the ‘*Ākhirah* and there is a reward or punishment which comes within the life of this world in a way that a good person is blessed with colleagues who are equally good and honest and whose contribution to whatever is undertaken makes them rise and prosper together. In contrast, there is the person with evil deeds and evil intention who gets what he deserves. The colleagues he gets and the help and assistance he employs are no different than him. What is left of his misfortune, the evil group around him takes care of that when it pushes him into a far deeper abyss.

As mentioned earlier, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta‘ālā is pleased with a ruler, He gives him good ministers and

good staff who make his government well-managed and progress-prone - and when Allah Ta‘ālā is displeased with someone, he gets colleagues who are bad and so are the officials he must deal with. As a result, even if he wishes to do something good, he cannot get it done.

### **An oppressor is punished at the hands of another oppressor**

The sense of the verse given above is in terms of its translation according to the first meaning mentioned earlier. As for the second meaning mentioned alongside, reported from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضى الله عنه, Sayyidnā ibn Zayd رضى الله عنه, Mālik ibn Dinār and others is a *Tafsīr* according to which, ‘Allah Ta‘ālā sets some unjust people (*Zālim*) over other unjust people and thus has one *Zālim* (oppressor) punished at the hands of another *Zālim*.’

This approach to meaning is also correct and sound in its place, and is in accord with other statements of the Qur‘ān and *Hadīth*. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said in a *Hadīth*: كَمَا تَكُونُونَ كَذَلِكَ يُؤْتَرُ عَلَيْكُمْ that is, as you shall be, so shall be the rulers set on you. If you are unjust and evil, your rulers will also be unjust and evil. And if you are good in your deeds and characters, Allah Ta‘ālā will make good, kind and just people your rulers.

Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه says: When Allah Ta‘ālā wishes well for a people, He appoints the best rulers and officials for them - and when He wishes otherwise for a people, He sets the worst rulers and officials over them. (*Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ*)

According to Ruḥ al-Ma‘ānī, it is on the authority of this verse that Muslim jurists prove that: When people of a country, turn away from Allah Ta‘ālā and become involved in deeds of injustice and oppression, Allah Ta‘ālā sets oppressive rulers and officials over them and lets them be punished at their hands.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه, Ibn Kathīr has reported a decisive statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: مَنْ سَلَطَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ (injustice) then Allah Ta‘ālā sets that very *Zālim* on him to torment him, and it is at his hands that he gets his punishment.

Mentioned in the second verse (130), is a question which will be asked of the Jinn and human beings on the plains of Resurrection.

They will be asked to show the reason why they chose to disbelieve and disobey Allah Ta‘ālā. They were told that they could not deny that Divinely ordained messengers from among them did reach them, messengers who recited to them the verses of Allah and warned them of that day of reckoning. In the reply to this question, mentioned there is their confession that the messengers did come, they did tell them the truth, and that they were involved with disbelief and disobedience. But, no reason for this wrongdoing was given from their side. Instead, Allah Ta‘ālā has Himself given its reason by saying: وَعَوَّرْنَاهُمُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (And the worldly life had deceived them). It means that the charms of their transitory life had put them on the wrong track. They thought that it was everything, which was really nothing, and that made them heedless to their end.

There is something noteworthy here. There are other verses in the Qur‘ān which say that the disbelievers will deny their *Kufr* and *Shirk* when asked to explain it on the day of Resurrection and before their Lord, they would lie by saying: وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ that is, ‘we swear by Allah, our Lord, we were no *mushriks* (of those who ascribe partners to Him).’ Now, this verse tells us that they would be ashamed of their *Kufr* and *Shirk* and will confess their error. On the outside, this seems to be contradictory. But, there are further explanations in other verses of the Qur‘ān that they would initially deny when asked, but, when Allah Ta‘ālā - in His perfect power - would make them speechless, witnesses will come from different parts of their own body. Then, Allah will give them their speech back and they will tell everything about their misdeed openly and clearly. Then, the Jinn and human beings will find out that all parts of their body were really the private eyes of the created system which finally produced the true evidence on everything about them. Then, left with no choice to deny, they will confess.

### **Are there messengers of Allah among the Jinn too?**

Something else to be considered here is that, in this verse, Allah Ta‘ālā has addressed both Jinnkind and mankind and asked them about messengers (*rasūl*) coming to them, messengers of Allah who were from among them. This shows that messengers have been sent to the Jinnkind from among their own kind - as is the case with human-kind among whom the messengers were sent from among them, that



is, they were human beings.

On this question, the ‘*Ulamā’* of *Tafsīr* and *Ḥadīth* differ. Some say that *Rasūl* (messenger) and *Nabiyy* (prophet) have always been human. There has been no *Rasūl* appointed directly from among the Jinn-kind. Instead, what has happened is that there have been Jinns charged with the mission of getting reports of the message of truth conveyed by human prophets and messengers and take it to their kind. They were really, in that way, couriers and message-bearers of a *Rasūl*. Therefore, they too are called *rasūl* or carrier of a message, within the literal sense of the word in Arabic. The proof of the position taken by these respected scholars comes from the verses of the Qur‘ān where sayings of the Jinn that they conveyed the Qur‘ān or the saying of the prophet to their kind have been mentioned, for example: *وَلَوْ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ* (... and they returned to their people to warn them - 46:29), and in the verse of Sūrah Al-Jinn: *فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا . يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ* (... they said: Indeed, we have heard a wonderful Qur‘ān that leads to rectitude, so in it we believe - 72:1).

But, there is a group of ‘*Ulamā’* who, given the outward meaning of this verse, also believe that, before the appearance of the Last among Prophets *صلى الله عليه وسلم*, each of the two species had their messengers from among them. To human beings came messengers who were human beings, and to the different classes of the Jinn, messengers were sent from among their kind only. It is the distinction of the Last among Prophets *صلى الله عليه وسلم* that he was sent as the only *Rasūl* for all human beings and the Jinn of the whole world - and that too was not limited for one given time - in fact, all human beings and the Jinn born right up to the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* shall be his community and he alone shall be the *Rasūl* and *Nabiyy* for them.

### Related Notes on Hindu Autars

Leading scholars of *Tafsīr*, Kalābi and Mujāhid hold that the Autars of Hindus are generally from the Jinns. Qaḍī Thanā‘ullah of Pānīpat, in his *Tafsīr* Mazharī, has followed this view. According to him, it proves that, before Sayyidnā Ādam *عليه السلام*, the messengers of the Jinn used to be from their kind only. Then, it is proved that the Jinn inhabited the earth thousands of years before human beings - and since they too are obligated to observe the precepts of the injunctions of the Sha-

rī'ah like human beings, it is necessary on the basis of reason and revelation that they too should have prophets and messengers among them in order to convey the commandments of Allah Ta'ālā.

Qaḍī Thanā'ullah Pānīpatī has said that the Hindus of India claim the history of their Vedas as thousands of years old. According to them their religious deities they called Autār date back to the same early time. It is not far out to say that they may be these very prophets and messengers of the Jinnkind, and may be the instructions brought by them were put together in the form of some book. The images and idols of Autars of Hindus placed in temples have particular patterns. Some are represented with several faces, others with many hands and feet, while still others would have other features such as a trunk like that of an elephant. They are very different from common human shapes. That the Jinn could transform themselves into such shapes is not beyond the range of probability. Therefore, saying that their Autar might be the prophets, messengers or their deputies who came to serve the Jinnkind - and their book itself be the collection of their instructions - is not so far out either. Then, gradually, as there were alterations in other books, alterations were made here too and what was left of it was idolatory and *Shirk*.

However, even if that original book and the authentic instructions left by those messengers were present, they would have stood abrogated after the appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the universal application of his prophethood. And that it would have become impossible to act in accordance with it after its having been deformed and altered is something evident by itself.

The third verse (131) tells us that sending prophets and messengers among human beings and the Jinn is based on the dictate of justice and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā for He does not send punishment over a people unless they have been awakened through His blessed messengers and provided with the light of guidance.

The sense of the fourth verse (132) is fairly clear. It says that with Allah there are ranks for classes of people among human beings and the Jinn. These ranks have been assigned in terms of their deeds. When rewarded or punished, the measure used shall be that of their deeds.

## Verses 133 - 136

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ۗ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْ  
 بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ ۖ كَمَا أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ إِنْ  
 مَا تَوْعَدُونَ لَأْتٍ ۖ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ قُلْ يَقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا  
 عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ ۖ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ ۖ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۖ مَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ  
 عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ  
 مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا فَقَالُوا هَذَا لِلَّهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ ۖ وَهَذَا  
 لِشُرَكَائِنَا ۖ فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَائِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا كَانَ  
 لِلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلَىٰ شُرَكَائِهِمْ ۗ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

And your Lord is the All-Independent, the Master of Mercy. If He wills, He shall take you away and shall bring after you whom He wills just as He has raised you from the progeny of other people. [133]

Surely what you are promised is bound to come, and you cannot frustrate (it). [134]

Say, "O my people, do at your place (whatever you do) I am to do (in my way). So, you will know for whom is the ultimate abode. Surely, the unjust shall not be successful. [135]

And they have assigned a portion for Allah from what He has created from the tillage and the cattle, and they said, "This is for Allah" so they claimed - "and this is for our associate-gods." Then, what was for their associate-gods never reaches Allah, and what was for Allah does reach their associate-gods. Evil is what they judge. [136]

### Commentary

Stated in previous verses was that Allah Ta‘ālā has always been sending His messengers and the rules of conduct required by Him to every set of people among the Jinn and the human beings and, unless they were fully warned through their messengers, punishment was never given to them for their disbelief and disobedience.

In the first (133) of the four verses cited above, it has been pointed out that the practice of sending messengers and scriptures was not there because the Lord of the universe needed our obedience and worship, or some task of His depended on our obedience. No, this was never so. He is absolutely All-Independent, and need-free. But, alongwith His perfect freedom from dependence and need, there is that attribute of mercy in Him. See how He brings the entire universe into existence, then He maintains it and keeps fulfilling all outward and inward, present and future needs of everyone and everything. The cause is this very attribute of mercy. Otherwise, human beings, being what they are, would have hardly been able to produce what they needed, not to say much about their lack of etiquette in how to ask for what they need. This is particularly true about the very blessing of existence. That it has been bestowed without asking is all too clear. No human being anywhere has prayed to be born - nor can praying before coming into existence be imagined. Similarly, there are the limbs of the human body which go in the creation of a living body - the eyes, ears, hands, feet, the heart and the brain. Were they asked for by any human being? Or, did one of them had the consciousness and etiquette to ask for them? Nothing of the sort is true. The truth is: we were not there, we did not ask - it was His mercy hearing the unsaid!

### **Allah is All-Independent and His Creation is only a Mirror of His Mercy**

In this verse, the words: رَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ describe how absolutely free from and independent of need the Lord of all lords is. But, by adding the words: ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ soon after, it was pointed out that, though He needs none, depends on none, is independent of everyone and everything in the universe, and the universe itself, yet, alongwith all that, He is also the one who has mercy and dispenses it at will.

### **Allah, in His Wisdom, Made no Human Being Need-Free - If So, Man Turns To Tyranny**

It is certainly a great blessing of Allah, otherwise human beings have their own ways of neglect. When they become free from needs and independent of circumstantial compulsions, they stop caring for the benefit or loss and the sorrow or comfort of others. In fact, what usually happens under such situations is that one becomes all the

more adamant on inflicting injustice and oppression against others. Says a verse of the Holy Qur'an: *إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُفٍ* (96:6), that is, when human beings find themselves need-free and independent, they are ready to rebel and transgress. Therefore, Allah Almighty has made man so tied up with needs which cannot be fulfilled without the help of others. A king needs his retinue of liveries, the wealthy man needs his help, the industrialist depends on his labour. The driver of a passenger vehicle comes out on the streets to earn his living of the day while one who can afford to pay for the ride has to hail for one. Nature has chained them together. Each needs the other and no one is doing any favour. Without this arrangement, no rich man will pay a dime to anyone and no handyman or porter would care to carry someone else's burden. So, all this is a manifestation of the most perfect attribute of Allah Ta'ālā who is All-Independent, yet the Master of Mercy. The text could have used a single word form such as *Ar-Rahman* (All-Merciful) or *Ar-Rahīm* (Very-Merciful) and that would have served the purpose of describing the mercy of Allah. But, the choice of a compound form: *ذُرِّ الرَّحْمَةِ* (*Dhur-Rahmah*: The Master of Mercy) has been preferred because it shows the correlation between the two attributes of Allah Ta'ālā described in the verse. He is All-Independent, yet He is the master-dispenser of mercy - an attribute which is the real cause of sending messengers and books for the good of human beings.

After that, it was also made clear that the way His mercy is universal and perfect, in the same way His power holds control over everything. If He wills, He could undo everyone in a moment - and even this undoing of the entire creation would not cause the slightest difference to the working of His power. Then, if He wills to undo the present system of the entire universe and replace it with another set of creation in the same manner and at the same time - He can certainly do that. An evidence of this possible happening always remains before human beings of all ages. Think of the millions of human beings who inhabit the near and far corners of the earth and run the business of their lives, then think of the time a hundred years earlier. You shall realize that the earth was inhabited as it is now, and things were going on as usual, but none of the present inhabitants of the earth, the movers and shakers of things, were there. What was there was a different set of people - and that different set of people lies buried under

the earth with no traces to be found today. The people on the earth today are the descendants of the earlier generation of people. Says the Qur‘ān: *إِنْ يَشَاءُ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ كَمَا أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ قَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ* (If He wills, He shall take you away and shall bring after you whom He wills just as He has raised you from the progeny of other people -133). The sense of “*يُذْهِبْكُمْ*” : *yudhhibkum*, translated as ‘take you away,’ is to undo or make absent with no traces left behind. This is why there is no reference to destroying, killing or exterminating. The statement in the text restricts itself to ‘taking’ which denotes a state of unmaking, unbeing, loss of name, identity and trace.

After having established in the first verse that Allah is All-Independent (*Ghaniyy*), Master of Mercy (*Dhur-Raḥmah*) and All-Powerful too, the text carries a warning given to disobedient people: *إِنَّ مَا تُوْعَدُونَ لَأْتِي وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ* : ‘Surely what you are promised [that is, the Divine punishment] is bound to come, and you cannot frustrate [it].’

Another method to awaken them from their heedlessness was adopted in the third verse (135) where it was said: *قُلْ يَعْزِمُ أَعْمَلُوا عَلَيَّ مَكَانَتِي كَمَا أَمَرْتُ أَنْتُمْ بِأَعْمَالِكُمْ* (Say, “O my people, do at your place (whatever you do) I am to do (in my way). So, you will know for whom is the ultimate abode. Surely, the unjust shall not be successful). This is addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being asked to tell those people of his in Makkah that the choice of not accepting what he is saying is theirs. Let them not accept it, stay as they are and keep on doing what their belief and hostility tell them to do - and he too will keep on doing what his belief tells him to do. In that, there was no loss for him. But, very soon, they will be the ones to find out who will be blessed with the ultimate salvation and success of the Hereafter. And, in this, let them not forget that the *Zalim*, the unjust, the usurpers of rights, never succeed.

Commenting on this verse, *Tafsīr* authority, Ibn Kathīr pointed out that the exact words of the text here are: *مَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ* (for whom is the ultimate abode) and not: *عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ الْآخِرَةِ* (the ultimate abode of *Akhirah*), that is, the suffix of ‘*Ākhirah*’ or Hereafter is not there. This tells us that, much earlier than the abode of *Akhirah*, the ultimate success falls to the lot of the righteous servants of Allah alone even within the present abode of the world. This stands proved from the life and times

of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his blessed Companions. Not much time passed when all wielders of power and authority found themselves disgraced before them. Their countries were conquered at their hands. Within the period of prophethood, the whole Arabia came under his authority which soon extended to Yaman, Bahrain and the borders of Syria. Then, it was at the hands of his *Khulafā'* and the *Saḥābah* that a major part of the known world of the time came under their aegis. Fullfilled stood the promise of Allah Ta‘ālā: **كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَعْلَبَنَّ أَنَا** (Allah has written: I shall overcome, I, and My Messengers - 58:21). And again, it was said in another verse: **إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا** **وَيَوْمَ يُقْرَمُ الْأَشْهَادُ** that is, 'We shall help Our Messengers, and those who have believed, in the present world, and on the Day of *Qiyāmah*, when witnesses will stand to record their testimony on the reckoning of deeds - 40:51.'

In the fourth verse (136), the disbelievers of Arabia have been admonished for a particular error in their behaviour. The custom was that they would take out from the produce of their lands and from the income of their businesses a portion for Allah and a portion for their idols. The portion taken out for Allah they would spend on the poor and the needy while the portion taken out in the name of their idols they would spend on the priests and keepers of the temple of idols.

To begin with, enough was their injustice in that everything was created by Allah Ta‘ālā, and the produce which came from them was bestowed by Him, yet they went ahead and made idols to share in what was given by Him. On top of this, they would add insult to injury when, should there be a drop in produce, they would apply this shortfall against the portion they meant for Allah saying that Allah was Independent and did not need their things. Thus, they would exact the portion of their idols in full, as well as that of their own. On some occasion, if it so happened that something from the portion taken out for the idols, or from that of their own, went into the portion reserved for Allah, they would pick it up and take it out of there to keep their accounting straight! And if came the occasion when things were the reverse of it, that is, if anything belonging to the portion of Allah was thrown in their own portion, or in the portion of their idols, it was left where it was saying that Allah is need-free, therefore, any

shortage in His share will not make any difference! The Holy Qur‘ān, taking notice of this crooked conduct of theirs, has said: سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (Evil is what they judge -136). It means that their judgement is evil and crude because they are not realizing that it is Allah who created them and created everything that appears to belong to them, yet they go about equating others with Him, and to top it all, they find excuses to shift elsewhere what, according to their own intention, was supposed to belong to Allah.

### **The Admonition for Disbelievers - A Lesson for Muslims**

This is an admonition directed against the waywardness of the disbelievers of Arabia. However, by implication, it holds a sharp lesson for Muslims as well - Muslims who devote their full potential, their life given by Allah, their body and mind, into different sections. They would reserve part of their years and time in life for Allah and His worship - though the right of Allah demanded that all time frames of their living years should have been reserved to obey and worship Him alone. May be, they could have taken out some time for themselves too to take care of human compulsions - and even then, the truth is that the right of Allah that we be grateful to Him would have still remained unfulfilled! But, here we are, in our time and in our places, doing unbelievable things. If, in the twenty four hours of a day and night of our lives, we do get around to fix some time to be devoted to remember Allah and engage ourselves in what we know as His essential *‘Ibādah*, then strange things start happening. There comes an urgent need, a call or an appointment or something like that, and we become pragmatic all of a sudden. The function, the business, the need comes first. No postponement is made in what is pragmatic or personal. The urgency of work stays. The inevitability of rest time stays. The axe falls on nothing but the time which had been fixed for devotion to Allah through prayers and recitation of the Qur‘ān. This happens most of the time - emergency, urgency, sickness or any other call - what is the first casualty in this rush is nothing but the time that we had earmarked for our *Dhikr* and *‘Ibādah*. We just cannot say how wrong, how ungrateful and how right-compromising this attitude is. May Allah Ta‘ālā keep us and all Muslims protected from it.



## Verses 137 - 140

وَكَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ أَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَاؤُهُمْ  
 لِيُرَدُّوهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا فَعَلُوهُ  
 فَذَرَهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَقَالُوا هَذِهِ أَنْعَامٌ وَحَرَّتْ جِجْرَتُهَا  
 لَا يَطْعَمُهَا إِلَّا مَنْ نَّشَاءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَأَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ طَهُورُهَا  
 وَأَنْعَامٌ لَا يَذْكُرُونَ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَاءً عَلَيْهِ سَيَجْزِيهِمْ بِمَا  
 كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَقَالُوا مَا فِي بُطُونِ هَذِهِ الْأَنْعَامِ  
 خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُورِنَا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيَّٰ أَرْوَاجِنَا ۖ وَإِن يَكُن مِّمَّتَهُ فَهُمْ  
 فِيهِ شُرَكَاؤُا۟ سَيَجْزِيهِمْ وَصَفَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قَدْ  
 خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ  
 اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

And thus their associate-gods have made the killing of their children alluring to many associators (idolators), so that they may lead them to disaster and may confuse their faith for them. And had Allah willed, they would not have done it. So, leave them with what they fabricate. [137]

And they say, "These are prohibited cattle and produce; none can eat them except those whom we wish" - so they claimed - "and there are cattle whose backs are prohibited (for riding or loading)." And there are cattle over which they do not pronounce the name of Allah, a fabrication against Him. He shall recompense them for what they have been fabricating. [138]

And they say, "Whatever is in the wombs of these cattle is purely for our males, and forbidden to our wives." And if it be dead, then in it they all are sharers. Soon, He shall recompense them for what they attribute. Surely, He is All-Wise, All-Knowing. [139]

Losers are those who kill their children foolishly, without knowledge, and have taken as prohibited what Al-

**lah has provided them - a fabrication against Allah. They have gone astray, and they are not on the right path. [140]**

### Linkage of Verses

Described in the previous verses were false beliefs of the *mushriks* of Arabia while the present verses recount their practical errors and ignorant customs. The customs of *Jāhiliyyah* mentioned in these verses are: (1) They took out a portion in the name of Allah from grains and fruits, and some in the name of idols and Jinns. Then, if by chance, some part of what belonged to the portion of Allah got mixed up with the portion reserved for idols, they would let it stay mixed as it was. When the position was the reverse of it, they would take it out and make the portion set for idols even. The excuse was that Allah is need-free. A cut in His share does not harm Him while the partners need it - so, their share should not be decreased. This evil custom was mentioned earlier in verse 136.

(2) The second custom was that they would release animals they called *Baḥīrah* and *Sā‘ibah* in the name of idols and said that they were doing it for the pleasure of Allah. Here too, the portion allotted to idols was that the act of worship was intended for them - and the portion allotted to Allah was that they aimed to please Allah.

(3) The third custom was that of killing their female children.

(4) The fourth custom was that they would endow some tillage in the name of idols saying that only men could use its produce. Giving or not giving a share from it to women depended on their will. Women had no right to demand.

(5) They would do the same thing with cattle when they would restrict their use for men only.

(6) They considered the quadruped animals they released in the name of idols as unlawful for purposes of riding or carrying loads.

(7) There were quadruped animals they would specify. Using them at any time, they would not pronounce the name of Allah, neither when milking, nor when riding and nor when slaughtering.

(8) The eighth custom was that they would release animals in the name of idols, naming them as *Baḥīrah* or *Sā‘ibah*. When, at the time

of slaughter, the calf came out alive, they would slaughter it as well - but, would take it as lawful for men only; for women, they took it to be unlawful - and if the calf was born still, it was supposed to be lawful for everyone.

(9) Even milk from some animals was considered lawful for men and unlawful for women.

(10) They took reverence for four kinds of animals: *Bahīrah*, *Sāibah*, *Wasīlah* and *Hāmī*, as an act of worship.

[All these narrations appear in Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr and Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Ibn Zayd and As-Suddiy with exegetic deductions of Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Hātim, Ibn Abī Ash-Shaybah and Ibn Ḥumayd] [As in Bayān al-Qur'ān of Maulānā Thānavī]

### Verses 141 - 142

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرِ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَالنَّخْلَ  
وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا أَكْلُهُ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرَّمَانَ مَتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرِ  
مَتَشَابِهٍ ط كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ وَلَا  
تُسْرِفُوا ط إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ حَمُولَةٌ  
وَفَرَشَاتٌ ط كُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ط  
إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

And He is the One who has created gardens trellised and untrellised, and date-palms and crops with a variety of edibles, and the olive and the pomegranate, similar and not similar to each other. Eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay its due on the day of harvest, and do not be extravagant. Surely, Allah does not like the extravagant. [141]

And among cattle (He has created) those fit for loading and those fit for laying. Eat of what Allah has provided you, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely, he is an open enemy to you. [142]

### Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how astray the disbelievers

of Makkah had gone when they had taken their self-carved, lifeless, insensate idols as partners in the Divinity of Allah as they made them share in animals created by Him and in many other blessings which were bestowed on them. Their transgression went to the limits when they would take out charities from these blessings as an act of worship, setting aside a portion for Allah and another for their idols. Then, they would employ different excuses to take out what belonged to the portion set aside for Allah and put it in the portion reserved for the idols. Similarly, there were many other ignorance-based arbitrary customs which they had given legal status.

In the first (141) of the two verses quoted above, Allah Ta‘ālā mentions the wonders wrought by His perfect power in the form of what grows on the earth bringing forth the fruits of His creation. Similarly, in the second verse (142), pointed to was the creation of the different kinds of animals and cattle. Then, with this in view, comes the admonition - how could a people become so sightless as to undermine their Powerful, Knowing and Aware Creator in favour of things that weak, inert and unaware, and start taking the later as His associates and partners.

After that, they were guided towards the straight path, the most sound approach to life. They were told to understand that there was no partner or associate with Allah when He created and bestowed on them things which benefit them - how then, can they take them as sharers in the worship of Allah, something which has to be exclusively for Him? This was rank ingratitude for His blessings, and certainly an injustice. They should realize that it was Allah who bestowed these things on them. It was He who made them work for them so that they could use them as they wished and then, He made these things lawful for them. So, keeping these factors in view, it was their duty to remember the right of Allah, and be grateful to Him whenever they benefit from His blessings, and to stop making satanic thoughts and ignorance-based customs a part of their faith.

### Some Words and Their Meanings

The word: **أَنْشَأَ** (*ansha‘a*) in the first verse means ‘created.’ The second word: **مَعْرُوشَاتٍ** (*ma‘rūshāt*) is from: **عَرَّشَ** (*‘arsh*) which means to raise, to make go high. ‘*Ma‘rūshāt*’ refers to vines of plants which are mounted

on supports called trellis, such as, the grape, and some vegetables. In contrast, is: غَيْرَ مَعْرُوضَاتٍ (*ghayra ma‘rūshāt*: untrellised) which includes all plants the vines of which are not raised high - whether trees with trunk and without vines, or they may be with vines which spread on the ground and are not raised, such as, the melon.

The word: النَّخْل (*an-nakhl*) means the date tree; الزَّرْع (*az-zar‘*) is crops of all kinds. The word: الزَّيْتُون (*az-zaytūn*) is the name of the olive tree, and of its fruit as well; and: الرُّمَّان (*ar-rummān*) is pomegranate.

In these verses, two kinds of farm or garden plants have been mentioned: (1) Those the vines of which are raised high, and (2) those the vines of which are not raised. The hint given is that Allah’s creation is full of wisdom and mystery. Here is the same soil, the same water, air, atmosphere, yet the plants that grow are different. Then, a variety was introduced through the processing, colouring and ripening of fruits, and by the employment of countless and complex properties embedded in them, some plants were designed to bear fruit only when their vines were raised up - and even if it does show up, it would not grow and survive, such as, the grape. Then, some plants were taught a grammar of growth so that their vines would not go up even if anyone tried to do that - and should it, by chance, climb up, the fruit will grow weak and wither away, as is the case with melons of all kinds. Certainly unusual is the phenomena when some trees were made to stand on strong trunks and taken as high as it would not be possible for human ingenuity to accomplish in common practice. This talisman of trees is not simply accidental. It has wisdom, intention and mastery of execution behind it. Trees have properties and fruits have tempers. Some fruits grow and ripen in the soil and on the ground. A touch of soil would spoil others. Some of them find it necessary to hang by high branches, encounter fresh air, soak sunrays and starlights and get their colour. To each, nature has given a suitable system to perform by.

فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

So blessed be Allah, the best of creators -23:14

After that, dates and crops were mentioned specially. The date fruit is usually eaten for pleasure. If one is hungry, it will serve as

regular food. Crops from farms provide food grains for human beings and fodder for animals. After having mentioned these two, it was said: **مُخْتَلِفًا أَكْلُهُ** (with a variety of edibles). Here, the pronoun in: **أَكْلُهُ** (*ukuluhū*) may be taken as referring back to: **زُرْع** (*zar‘*: crops), or to: **نَخْل** (*nakhl* : date-palms) as well. However, the sense includes both. Thus, the meaning is that there are different kinds of dates, and each kind has a different taste. As for crops, the kinds go to hundreds - and each kind has its own distinct taste, property and use. Their climate and land are the same yet there is a great difference in fruits produced. Then, each kind has a different set of properties and benefits, yet they are so unique in diversity. This is a phenomenon which compels even a man of ordinary insight to realize and accept that the Power and Being that created them is a Being beyond the parameters of comprehension, the measure of whose knowledge and wisdom cannot even be imagined by human beings.

After that, two more things were mentioned: olive and pomegranate. Olive is fruit and vegetable both. The oil from olive is clean, transparent and delicate. It is better than most oils. Its properties, uses and benefits are numerous. In fact, it cures many ailments. Similarly, there are many properties and benefits of pomegranate which most people know. After mentioning these two fruits, it was said: **مُتَشَابِهًا وَعَيْرٍ مُتَشَابِهٍ** (similar and not similar). It means that some trees from among them bear fruits which, in terms of colour and taste, are similar to each other. Then, there are some others which have different colour and taste. That some pomegranate fruits are similar in colour, taste and size and some others are different holds true for olives too.

Having mentioned kinds of trees and fruits, given there in this verse are two injunctions to be followed. The first one is a natural satisfier of human desires. It was said: **كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ** (eat of its fruit when it bears fruit). The hint given is that the purpose of the Creator in creating this diverse array of fruits is not to fulfill any of His need. These have been created for their benefit. Therefore, they were welcome to eat and enjoy them. By adding: **إِذَا أَثْمَرَ** (*idhā athmara* : when it bears fruit), it was pointed out that making the fruits come out of the branches of the tree was a job beyond them. However, when those

fruits form and grow full with the permission of Allah, they become entitled to eat them at that time, whether not ripe yet.

### The 'Ushr of Land

The second injunction given in this verse is: **وَأْتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ** (and pay its due on the day of its harvest). The word: **اتوا** (*atu*) means 'bring' or 'pay'; and: **حَصَادٍ** (*hasād*) refers to the 'harvesting of crops' or 'picking of fruits.' And the pronoun in: **حَقَّهُ** (*haqqahū* : its due) applies to everything edible mentioned above. The sense of the verse is : Eat, drink and use these things, but remember to pay its due at the time of harvesting the crops or picking the fruit. 'Haqq' or 'due' denotes giving it as *sadaqah* or charity to the poor and needy - as it appears in another verse in the form of a general rule:

**وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا لِلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ**

And in the properties of righteous people, there is a due right of the poor and needy - the asking and the non-asking - 70:24.

Is this *sadaqah* referred to here means common charities known as *Sadaqah* and *Khayrāt*, or the particular *sadaqah* known as 'the *Zakāh* of the land' or 'Ushr'? There are two sayings of authorities among *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi‘in* in this matter. Some among them have favoured the first possibility. The reason given by them is that this verse is *Makkī* and the obligation of *Zakāh* came into force two years after the Hijrah to *Madīna al-Ṭayyibah*. Therefore, 'haqq' at this place cannot apply to the 'haqq' of the *Zakāh* of land. Some others among them have counted this verse as one of the *Madanī* verses and, according to them, 'haqqahū' refers to the *Zakāh* of the land which is 'Ushr.

*Tafsīr* authority, *Ibn Kathīr*, in his *Tafsīr* and *Ibn al-‘Arabī* in *Aḥ-kām al-Qur‘ān* have resolved this by saying that, whether the verse is *Makkī* or *Madanī*, in both events, the verse could mean the *Zakāh* of land, that is, 'Ushr - because, according to them, the initial injunction making *Zakāh* obligatory had already been revealed in *Makkah*. The verse of *Sūrah Al-Muzzammil* which contains the injunction of *Zakāh* is *Makkī* by consensus. However, the rate and threshold (*niṣāb*) of *Zakāh* was determined after the Hijrah. The present verse only tells us that Allah has made a due payable on the produce of the land. Its quantity has not been determined here. Therefore, as far as the

quantity is concerned, this verse is brief. The conditions in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah were different. The determination of this quantity was not needed there because Muslims did not have the assurance of acquiring the produce of their lands and fruit farms conveniently and in peace. So, during those days, the practice was no different that it used to be among people of charitable background who would give out part of their produce to the poor and needy who would gather around at the time of harvesting crops or picking fruits. No quantity was fixed for that purpose. That there was, even before Islam, the custom of such charitable giving from the land produce among other communities as well is mentioned in a verse of the Qur'an: *إِنَّا بَلَوْنَهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ* (Verily We have tried them as We tried the People Of the Garden, when they resolved to gather the fruits of the [garden] in the morning - 68:17 - AYA). It was two year after the Hijrah, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ explained the details of the quantities and thresholds of wealth, property and *Zakāh* under the guidance of Divine revelation, he also explained the *Zakāh* of the land. This has been reported in all *Hadīth* books on the authority of narrations from Sayyidnā Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar and Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh (رضى الله عنهم اجمعين): *مَا سَقَتِ السَّمَاءُ فِيهِ الْعُشْرُ*: (وما سقى بالسَّائِبَةِ نِصْفُ الْعُشْرِ) It means 'in the lands watered by rains where not much effort is needed for irrigation, it is *wajib* to take out one-tenth of the produce as *Zakāh* - and against lands which are irrigated with water from wells taking out one-twentieth of the produce is *wājib* (obligatory).

In its Law of *Zakāh*, the Shari'ah of Islam has used a basic principle in determining *Zakāh* of all kinds. According to this principle, the quantity of *Zakāh* on a produce involving less labour and expenditure increases while, with the increase in the labour and expenditure on a produce, the quantity of *Zakāh* decreases in that proportion. Let us understand it with the help of an example. If someone finds an ancient treasure, or hits on a gold or silver mine while prospecting, then, one-fifth of it will be due on him as *Zakāh* - because the labour and expenditure factor is less while the produce is more. After that comes rain-dependent land which has the lowest ratio of labour and expenditure. The *Zakāh* for it was cut into half, that is, from one-fifth to one-tenth. After that there is the land irrigated with water from wells, or from irrigation canals against payment. This causes an increase in labour



and expenditure, so *Zakāh* against it was reduced by another half, that is, one-twentieth. Then, there is common cash, gold or silver, and trading goods. Procuring and multiplying these cost a good deal and need added labour. Therefore, the *Zakāh* for it was reduced by yet another half, that is, it was fixed at one-fortieth part.

In the present verse of the Qur‘ān, and in the *Hadīth* quoted above, no *Niṣāb* (threshold) for the produce of the land has been determined. Therefore, the juristic creed (*Madhab*) of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is: On the produce of the land, whether less or more, taking out its *Zakāh* is compulsory. There is a verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah which mentions the *Zakāh* of land. But, there too, no *Niṣāb* (threshold) has been mentioned. Quoted below is the text of that verse:

﴿ أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ﴾

O those who believe, spend of the good things you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you from the earth - 2:267.

[Comments on ‘Ushr lands also appear under the verse quoted immediately above in Ma‘ariful-Qur‘ān, English, Volume I, page 659]

As for trading goods and cattle, the *Nisab* (threshold) was given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ whereby there is no *Zakāh* under 52 1/2 tola of silver (1 tola = 0.41 ounces = 11.6363 g) or under forty goats or five camels. But, no *Niṣāb* has been determined concerning the produce of land in the *Hadīth* cited above, therefore, it is *Wājib* to take out *Zakāh* of the land whether the produce is more or less, big or small.

At the end of the verse (141) it was said: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ That is, do not spend beyond limits because Allah Ta‘ālā does not like wasteful spenders. A question arises here. In case a person spends everything he has in the way of Allah, his wealth, even his life, this cannot be called ‘*Israf*’ (extravagance). In fact, it would be difficult to say that, even by having done all that, one can be sure that he or she has done what was really the due of Allah! Then, what does this prohibition of ‘*Israf*’ or extravagance at this place really mean? The answer is that extravagance in one department of life usually causes shortfall, shortcoming or deficiency in other departments. One who spends extravagantly to fulfill his desires generally ends up failing in his duty to fulfill the due rights of others. Prohibited here is this kind of

shortcoming. It means that should a person give away whatever he has in the way of Allah and return with empty hands, how is he going to fulfill the rights of his children, family and relatives, even those of his own self? Therefore, the rule of guidance given is that one should observe moderation even when spending in the way of Allah so that all due rights can be taken care of.

#### Verses 143 - 144

ثَمِينَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ مِّنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ ۗ قُلْ ءَأَنذَرْتُكُمْ  
الذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامٌ  
الْأُنثَيَيْنِ ۗ نَبِّئُونِي بِعِلْمٍ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَمِنَ الْإِبِلِ  
اِثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ ۗ قُلْ ءَأَنذَرْتُكُمْ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا  
اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامٌ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ ۗ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ وَضَعَكُمُ  
اللَّهُ بِهَذَا ۗ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا لِّيُضِلَّ  
النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

(He has created) eight pairs: two of sheep and two of goats. Say, “Is it the two males that He has prohibited or the two females? Or, what the wombs of the two females contain? Tell me with knowledge if you are true” [143] and two of camels and two of cows. Say, “Is it the two males He has prohibited or the two females? Or, were you present when Allah has advised you of this?” So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah in order to misguide people without knowledge. Surely, Allah gives no guidance to an unjust people. [144]

#### Verses 145 - 147

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَن  
يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَّسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا  
أَهْلًا لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ ۗ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ

رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفْرٍ وَمِنَ  
الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا إِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُمَا  
أَوِ الْحَوَايَا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ وَإِنَّا  
لَصَدِيقُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَبِّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ  
وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

Say, "I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything prohibited for anyone who eats it, unless it be carrion or blood that has flowed out, or flesh of swine - because it is impure - or there be a sin by invoking on it the name of someone other than Allah. However, if anyone is compelled by necessity - neither desiring nor transgressing then, your Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [145]

And for those who are Jews We prohibited all that which has claws. And of cows and goats, We prohibited for them their fat, except what their backs contain, or the entrails, or what is attached to a bone. Thus We recompensed them for their transgression. And We are surely true. [146]

Then, if they belie you, say, "Your Lord is the Lord of all-embracing mercy, and His penalty cannot be averted from the sinning people." [147]

#### Verses 148 - 150

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا  
حَرَّمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّى  
ذَاقُوا بَأْسَنَا قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنَا إِن  
تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ قُلْ فَلِلَّهِ  
الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ فَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ قُلْ هَلُمَّ  
شُهَدَاءَكُمْ الَّذِينَ يَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ هَذَا فَإِن شَهِدُوا فَلَا

تَشْهَدُ مَعَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَالَّذِينَ لَا  
يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

Those who associate partners with Allah will say, “Had Allah willed, we would have not associated (partners with Him), nor our fathers, nor would we have made anything prohibited.” In the same way belied those before them until they tasted Our penalty. Say, “Have you any knowledge that you may bring forth for us? You follow nothing but whims, and do nothing but make conjectures.” [148]

Say, “Then, it is Allah who has the perfect proof. So, had He willed, He would have brought you all on the right path.” [149]

Say, “Bring your witnesses who testify that Allah has prohibited this.” Then, if they testify, do not testify with them, and do not follow the desires of those who have belied Our signs and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, and with their Lord, they equate others. [150]

### Verses 151 - 153

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا  
وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِمَّنْ أَمْلَاقٌ نَحْنُ  
نَرِزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ  
وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّيْتُكُمْ بِهِ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ  
أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ  
لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا  
قُرْبَىٰ وَعِصْهُدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّيْتُكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ  
﴿١٥٢﴾ وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَشِيعُوا

السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

Say, "Come, I recite what your Lord has prohibited for you: "Do not associate anything with Him (as partners); and be good to parents, and do not kill your children because of poverty - We will give provision to you, and to them as well - and do not go near shameful acts, whether they are open or secret; and do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except by right." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may understand. [151]

And do not approach the property of the orphan, except with the best possible conduct, until he reaches maturity. And give the measure and the weight to the full in all fairness - We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - and when you speak, be just, even if there be a relative; and fulfill the covenant of Allah." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may observe the advice. [152]

And: "This is My path, straight. So, follow it, and do not follow the (other) ways, lest it should take you away from His way." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may be God-fearing. [153]

### Commentary

Prior to the verses appearing above, for about two to three sections, the recurring theme has been how heedless and ignorant human beings had bypassed the law revealed by the Law Giver and the Creator of whatever there is in the heavens and the earth and, in its place, had taken ancestral and innovated customs as their religion. There were things Allah had made unlawful. They took them as lawful and started using them. Then, there were things Allah had made lawful. They made these unlawful for themselves. Again, they made some things lawful for men and unlawful for women, while some others they declared to be lawful for women but unlawful for men.

There are three verses here (143, 144 and 145) which describe those particular things which have been declared unlawful by Allah Ta‘ālā.

There are nine things mentioned in the detailed statement (151-152). After that, comes the tenth commandment in the words: هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ That is, this path of Mine is straight. So, follow it - 153. This statement points out to the religion and code (*Dīn* and *Sharī‘ah*) brought and taught by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and entrusts the whole field of Ḥalāl (lawful) and Ḥarām (unlawful), *Jā‘iz* (permissible) and *Nā-Jā‘iz* (impermissible), *Makrūh* (reprehensible) and *Mustaḥabb* (recommended) to the standard that everyone should follow the Muḥammadī Sharī‘ah, take what it says is Ḥalāl as Ḥalāl, and take what it says is Ḥaram as Ḥaram, and let no one go about deciding what is Ḥalāl and what is Ḥaram on one’s own.

Then, there appears a detailed statement of ten things in these verses where the real objective is to describe things which are Ḥaram - which required that all these be described in the negative case. But, the Holy Qur‘ān, in the wisdom of its approach, has described some of them positively in the imperative form - which means that acting against it is Ḥaram (Kashshāf). Its wisdom will become evident a little later. However, the ten things the unlawfulness of which appears in these verses are: (1) To associate anyone with Allah Ta‘ālā in belief, deed, worship or obedience; (2) not be good to parents; (3) to kill children because of poverty; (4) to indulge in shameful doings; (5) to kill someone unjustly; (6) to eat up the orphan’s property by false means; (7) to weigh or measure short; (8) to be unjust in witness, judgement or speech; (9) to betray the covenant of Allah; and (10) to avoid the straight path of Allah and follow other ways right and left.

### Some Virtues of the Verses

Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, an accomplished scholar of the Torah, was a Jew before he became a Muslim. He says that these verses of the Holy Qur‘ān which describe ten unlawful things are with what the Torah, the Book of Allah, begins after *Bismillah*. It has also been said that these are the ten commandments revealed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام.

Commentator of the Qur‘ān, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه says that these are the ‘Verses of Established Meaning’ (*Muḥkam Āyat*) mentioned in Sūrah ‘Āl-‘Imrān (3:7). On these, all religious systems brought by prophets عليهم السلام - from Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم - have been in agreement and none

of these was abrogated in any religion, community or Shari’ah. (Tafsīr Al-Bahr Al-Muḥīt)

### These Verses are the Will and Testament of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

According to a narration of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, he said that a person who wishes to see a special will of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with his seal on it, he should recite these verses. Therein lies the will and testament bequeathed under the command of his Lord by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to his *Ummah*.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā ‘Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit رضى الله عنه, it has been reported by Ḥākīm that, addressing his *Ṣaḥābah*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: ‘Who will take a pledge of allegiance at my hands (بيعت : *bay‘ah*) on three verses?’ After that, he recited these three verses and said: ‘A person who fulfills this *Bay‘ah* (pledge of allegiance), his reward stands due with Allah.’

### DETAILS OF TEN PROHIBITIONS AND EXPLANATION OF THE THREE VERSES

These verses (151-153) open with the words: **فَلْتَعَاوَنُوا أَلْتُمْ مَخْرَمَ رَبِّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ** (Say, “Come, I recite what your Lord has prohibited for you”). The word: **تَعَاوَنُوا** (*ta‘ālaw*) here (translated as ‘come,’ does carry the essential meaning, but misses the refinement of what it implies in the text - a difficulty technically impossible to surmount in a task of this delicate nature when exact parallels just do not exist - tr.) is an expression used at a time when the caller stands on high ground and calls those beneath to come close to him. The hint thus released is towards the prospect of their rising high and gaining prestige by accepting this invitation. The sense of the sentence where the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is that he should ask these people to come along so that he may recite to them things which Allah Ta‘ālā has made Ḥaram for them. What he was going to give them was a message directly from Allah Ta‘ālā and, as such, there was no intrusion of someone’s opinion, estimation or conjecture in it. This was in their interest so that they could get ready to stay safe against them rather than go about branding as Ḥaram what Allah has made Ḥalāl.

Though, the address in this verse directly refers to the disbelievers

of Makkah, but the subject of the address is general in its nature. It includes the entire humankind, whether believers or disbelievers, Arabs or non-Arabs, or those living now or generations to come in the future. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

### The First Grave Sin Forbidden is *Shirk*

After having addressed with this concern and elegance, the first thing to be identified of all that has been prohibited was: **لَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا**: That you shall not associate anyone or anything with Allah. This was the first task. And do not make idols into God like the polytheists of Arabia, nor call prophets God or son of God like Jews and Christians, nor take angels to be daughters of God like others, nor equate prophets and saints with Allah Ta'ālā in His attributes of knowledge and power like the ignorant masses.

### *Shirk* : Definition and Kinds

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the word: **شَيْئًا** (*shai'an*:anything), at this place, could also mean that one should not be involved in any kind of *Shirk*, whether manifest (*jaliyy*) or concealed (*khafiyy*). Everyone knows manifest *Shirk* which is the ascribing of equals or partners to Allah either by associating someone with Allah in worship and obedience or in His exclusive attributes. And concealed *Shirk* is that one, in his or her vocation in life, in material and religious objectives and in profit and loss, though holds the belief that Allah is the Maker and Mover of things yet, in practice, takes others as such, and pins all efforts and hopes on them, or is a hypocrite in acts of worship, offering prayers correctly to show off before others, or spends in charity to earn a good name for himself, or actually, in practice, takes someone other than Allah to be the controlling authority in profit and loss. The sage, Shaykh Sa'di رحمه الله عليه has put the idea in a nutshell when he said:

دریں نوعے از شرک پوشیده است کہ زیدم بہ بخشید و عمرم بختست

Concealed here too is a kind of *Shirk* -

That A made me gain and B made me lose.

The reality is no more but that, whatever the gain or loss, it is from that Absolute Master. The supposed names A and B are drapes from behind which comes the manifestation of gain or loss. Otherwise, the truth of the matter, as it appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, is: 'If all Jinns and



human beings join up to bring to you a benefit which Allah Ta‘ālā has not destined for you, they can never dare do that - in the same way, if all Jinns and human beings join up to bring a loss on you which Allah Ta‘ālā has not willed, this too is not possible for anyone to do.

In brief, one should abstain strictly from both kinds of Shirk, manifest and concealed. The way worshipping idols is included under Shirk, also included thereunder is equating prophets and saints with Allah Ta‘ālā in His attributes of knowledge and power. If, God forbid, this happens to be the very belief of someone, then, it will be classed as manifest Shirk; and if, such a belief is not there, but this happens to be done in actual practice, then, it will be called concealed Shirk. At this place, the very first instruction given is to stay away from Shirk. The reason is that Shirk is a crime about which the Qur‘ān has given the decision that, for it, there is no forgiveness. The forgiveness of sins - other than Shirk - is possible depending on different causes. Therefore, as narrated by Sayyidnā ‘Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit رضى الله عنه and Sayyidnā Abū Ad-Dardā’ رضى الله عنه, it appears in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

Do not ascribe anyone as partner with Allah - even if you are dismembered, or hanged, or burnt alive.

### The Second Sin : Mistreating Parents

Mentioned after that was: **وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا** (and be good to parents). The purpose at this place is to tell not to be disobedient to parents and not to cause pain to them. But, it is in a way of wisdom that the prohibition has been sublimated as ‘be good to parents.’ The aim is to point out that, in the matter of parents, it is not enough that one does not disobey parents or does not cause any pain to them, but it is one’s duty to keep them pleased with decent, generous and obliging treatment. This has been made more explicit in another verse of the Qur‘ān where it appears as: **وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ** which means: For them, lower your shoulders in humility - 17:24 - (an eloquently figurative mode of describing the attitude of love, reverence, readiness and availability to help out and care for, in all sincerity, and in tenderness at its sublimest, something the Qur‘ān has itself put in one word, ‘mercy’, suffixed after the words of the verse quoted above).

It will be noticed that, in this verse, causing pain to parents or ex-

posing them to physical or emotion inconveniences has been placed as the second crime after Shirk. This is similar to the instruction given in another verse of the Holy Qur‘ān where Allah Ta‘ālā has combined the duty of being obedient to them, and being responsible to see that they are comfortable, with the obligation to worship Him alone. It was said:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

And your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone other than Him and that you shall be good to parents - 17:23.

Then, in Sūrah Luqman, it was said:

أَنْ أَشْكُرَ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ط إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ

Be grateful to Me, and to your parents, and to Me is the return (meaning: If you do otherwise, you will be punished) - 31:14.

It has been reported from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two collections of Ṣaḥīḥ *Aḥādīth* by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim) that he asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: ‘Which deed is the best?’ He said: ‘Offering *Ṣalāh* at its due time (*Mustaḥabb* : recommended time).’ Then, he asked again: ‘After that, which deed is the best?’ To that, he said: ‘Being good to parents.’ Once again, he asked: ‘Which deed comes after that?’ He said: ‘*Jihād* in the way of Allah.’

According to a narration by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, once the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said the words: رَغِمَ أَنْفُهُ رَغِمَ أَنْفُهُ رَغِمَ أَنْفُهُ three times, that is, ‘disgraced is he, disgraced is he, disgraced is he.’ The noble Companions submitted: ‘*Yā Rasūl* Allah, who is disgraced?’ He said: ‘The person who found his father and mother, or one of them, in old age and still he did not enter the *Jannah*.’

It means that serving parents during their old age makes it certain that the server will be admitted to Paradise. And certainly deprived and disgraced is he who has allowed such an easy bargain of Paradise slip out of his hands. This bargain is easy because parents are naturally affectionate to their children on their own. A little consideration here and there would make them all too happy. So, pleasing parents does not depend on or require a major act of grace. The restriction of old age placed here is because parents, when healthy and strong, take

care of their needs by themselves - rather, would not hesitate to come to their assistance when needed, financially, physically or morally. At that time, neither do they need being served, nor would that service carry any distinct weight of its own. Serving parents can only be worthwhile and praiseworthy at a time when they need it because of their old age.

### The Third Prohibition : Killing Children

The third thing made Ḥaram in these verses is the killing of children. It is relevant in the context because the right of parents due on children was taken up before it - and here, it is the right of children which is due on parents. The worst limit of evil treatment of children was what was practiced in the days of *Jāhiliyyah* when they were killed or buried alive. This verse stops them from doing that. It was said: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ ط نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ (and do not kill your children because of poverty - We will give provision to you, and to them as well).

During the pre-Islam days of Arab *Jāhiliyyah*, there was a cruel custom. When a girl was born in a household, they would bury her alive fearing the shame of having to take someone as a son-in-law - and there were occasions when, fearing that they would have difficulties in feeding and providing for children, these cruel people would kill them with their own hands. The Qur‘ān erased this custom. Then, by saying what was said above, it gave them the treatment they needed against this mental sickness of theirs - because of which, that is, because of their worry as to how they were going to feed them, they committed such a heinous crime. Allah Ta‘ālā has told them in this verse that they were not the ones really responsible for feeding and providing for them. This was the direct responsibility of Allah Ta‘ālā. They too, in their food and provisions, were dependent on Him. He gives that to them. Then, they give it to children too. If He does not provide them with it, they could not even think of producing one grain of wheat or rice on their own. Miracles do not work like that. Bringing out a tiny seed by tearing its way through tons of earth on the fields in the form of a tender bud or shoot and then giving it the shape of a tree and then making them sprout with flowers and fruits is a question they should answer. Whose work is that? Can a father and mother do that? Far from it, these are all wonders wrought by the power and

wisdom of the Absolute Master. The role human beings play in this phenomena is limited. They can do no more than make the land clean and soft, water the plants when they come out and look after them. But, they have no role in making flowers and fruits come out. This tells us that the idea of parents that they provide for children is wrong. In fact, it is from the unseen treasures of Allah Ta'ālā Himself that parents too get their provision, and their children as well. Therefore, by bringing in the mention of parents earlier in the sentence, it was said: 'We will provide for you, and for them as well.' In making the reference to parents precede, the hint given may be that: The provisions are given to you so that you pass it on to children - as it appears in a *Hadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he is reported to have said:

إِنَّمَا تَنْصُرُونَ وَتُرْزُقُونَ بِضَعْفَاءِ كُمْ

It is only for the sake of the weak among you that Allah Ta'ālā helps and provides for you too.

The same subject appears in Sūrah al-Isrā' of the Holy Qur'an where, in the matter of *Rizq*, children have been mentioned before parents by saying: نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ that is, 'We shall provide for them, and for you as well - 17:21.' Here too, the hint given is that 'deserving of being provided for first, in Our sight, are weak children who cannot do that on their own - it is for their sake that *rizq* is given to you.'

### A Modern Form of Killing Children

It is obvious that the crime of killing children and that it is a grave sin as pointed out in this verse applies to formal killing as such. But, a little thought would prove that the failure to give proper education and training to children as a result of which they remain uninformed or heedless to Allah, His *Rasūl* and the concern for '*Ākhirah* and, God forbid, fall into immoral and shameless life patterns alien to Islam, then, this attitude too, shall be no less than killing of children. The Qur'an calls a person who does not know Allah and does not obey Him a dead person. This is what has been explained earlier in this very Sūrah in the verse: أَوْ مَن كَانَ مِنَّا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ (Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life ... - 6:122). People who do not attend to the grooming of the deeds and morals of their children, leave them open and free (to be hunted by aggressive influences around them, influences which

have an ‘open season’ in our time), or let them go through a system of education as a result of which Islamic morals are ruined, then, they too, in a way, are liable to be charged with the crime of killing their children - for formal killing only ruins what is one’s transitory life in the mortal world, but this type of killing ruins what is one’s eternal life in the ‘Ākhirah, a terrible loss indeed.

### The Fourth Prohibition : Shameful Acts

The fourth thing declared Ḥaram in these verses is the doing of what is shameful. About it, says the Qur‘ān: وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ (and do not go near shameful acts, whether they are open or secret-151).

The word: فَوَاحِشٌ (*al-fawāḥish*) is the plural form of: فَاحِشَةٌ (*fāḥishah*) and the words: فَحِشٌ (*fahsh*), فَحِشَاءٌ (*fahshā’*) and فَاحِشَةٌ (*fāḥisha*) are all verbal nouns and are usually translated in English as immodest, indecent or shameful acts. In the terminology of the Qur‘ān and Ḥadīth, these words are used to denote every evil act the vicious and disorderly effects of which reach far and wide. This is the meaning given by Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī in *Mufradāt al-Qur‘ān* and Ibn Kathīr in *An-Nihāyah*. The prohibition of *Fuḥsh* and *Fahshā’* (obscenity, indecency, adultery, fornication, whoredom or abomination or monstrosity of any description) appears time and again in the Holy Qur‘ān, for example, in Sūrah An-Naḥl, it is said: يَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (He forbids you from the indecent and the evil -16:90) and, in Sūrah Al-A‘rāf, it is said: حَرَّمَ رَبِّي الْفَوَاحِشَ (my Lord has forbidden indecent deeds - 7:33).

So, in this general sense of the word used by the Qur‘ān, included there are all grave sins, whether related to words or deeds, whether committed openly or secretly, in fact, all doings which are counter to good and right and all acts which are counter to modesty and shame. That is why this word is generally used in the sense of shameful deeds. In this verse of the Qur‘ān, it has been stressed that one should not go even near to what are shameful acts. If this is taken in a broad and general sense, it will become inclusive of all evil traits and sins, whether of speech, or those of hands and feet and the heart. And if it is taken in the commonly and widely understood sense, that is, in the sense of immodesty, then, it would be referring to shameful acts, their prelimineries and their means and motives.

Then, within this verse, there is the explanation of the word ‘*al-*

*fawāḥish*’ when it is said: *مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ* (whether they are open or secret). Thus, according to the first Tafsīr, all outward indecencies would mean all sins committed through speech or through the use of hands and feet etc., and inward indecencies would be referring to sins which issue forth from the heart, such as, envy, malice, greed, ungratefulness, impatience and others of this nature.

According to the other Tafsīr, outward indecencies would mean acts of immodesty indulged in openly while those inward would be the ones done secretly. The open practice of evil includes all its preliminaries and accessories. Looking at some woman with evil intentions, touching her with hands etc., talking to her in that way are all included under it. As for inward indecency, it includes all secret plans made to actualize thoughts and intentions which are put into practice to achieve the evil and indecent end.

Some respectable commentators say that outward indecencies refer to shameful acts the evil of which is common knowledge and everyone knows what it means. As for inward indecencies, they refer to acts which are immodest in the sight of Allah, though people generally do not take them as bad, or common people are not aware that they are Hāram, for example, after having divorced a wife thrice, to keep living with her as a wife (which she is not anymore), or marrying a woman marriage with whom is not lawful in Shari‘ah.

In short, this verse, in terms of the real sense of ‘*al-fawāḥish*’, encompasses all outward and inward sins - and, in terms of the commonly held view, it is inclusive of all open and secret methods of immodesty, indecency and act of shame. Then, the command given in this matter is that one should not go even near things like that. The insistence on ‘not going even near them’ means that one should even abstain from going to a place when there is an apprehension that such a visit would cause the visitor to be smeared with sin, and that one should also abstain from deeds which lead on to ways of sin. In a Hadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

مَنْ حَامَ حَوْلَ حِمَى أَوْشَكَ أَنْ يَبْقَعَ فِيهِ

It is not unlikely that one who keeps roaming around a prohibited place might enter it as well.

Therefore, precaution demands that one should not even go near what is prohibited.

### The Fifth Prohibition : Killing Unjustly

Of the prohibitions, the fifth is killing unjustly. About it, it was said: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ (and do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity). The details of this right to kill have been given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in a *Hadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه appearing in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. He said: ‘Killing a Muslim is not lawful except for three reasons: (1) That he commits adultery despite being married; (2) that he has killed someone unjustly, and is killed in even retaliation (*Qīṣāṣ*) for it; and (3) that, by leaving his true faith, he has become an apostate (*Murtadd*).’

When Sayyidnā ‘Uthmān al-Ghanī, the third Rightly-Guided Khalīfah was besieged by rebels who wanted to kill him, he recited this *Hadīth* before them and said: ‘With the grace of Allah, I have been free of these things all my life. Not only during my days in Islam, I never indulged in adultery even during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, nor did I ever kill anyone, nor did the thought that I should leave my faith in Islam ever crossed my mind. Then, on what basis do you want to kill me?’

And the way killing a Muslim is unlawful without valid reason, so it is with the killing of a non-Muslim who lives in an Islamic country as its law-abiding citizen, or is one of those with whom Muslims have a bilateral pact. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه reported in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: ‘Whoever has killed a *Dhimmi* (protected non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim country) has broken his covenant with Allah - and a person who has broken the covenant of Allah will never smell even the scent of *Jannah*, though the scent of *Jan-nah* reaches as far as a travel distance of seventy years.’

In this one verse - after having described five of the ten prohibitions - it was said: ذِكْرُكُمْ وَرِضْوَانُكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (This is what He has emphasized for you so that you may understand).

## The Sixth Prohibition : Eating up the Property of the Orphan by False Means

About the unlawfulness of devouring the property of the orphan by false means - the sixth command given in the second verse (152) - it was said: وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ (And do not approach the property of the orphan except with the best possible conduct, until he reaches maturity). The address here is to the guardians of orphaned children who are minors. The guardians have been told that they should treat the property of orphans as if it was fire. They should not go near it to take from it or eat of it unlawfully. What is said here appears in another verse of the Qur‘ān in the same words: وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ (17:34) and also in Sūrah Al-Nisā’ (4:10): ‘Surely, those who eat up the property of the orphans, unjustly, they only eat fire into their bellies, and they shall soon enter a blazing hell.)

However, protecting the property of the orphan and investing it in a permissible business where the danger of loss does not customarily exist is fair enough, even necessary. Guardians of the orphaned children should do so.

After that, specified was the limit until when the property of the orphan was to be guarded: حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ (until he reaches maturity), that is, when the orphan reaches maturity, the responsibility of the guardian ends and his property should be entrusted to him.

The word: اَشُدُّ (*ashudd*) really means strength. According to the majority of ‘*Ulamā*, it begins with puberty. When signs of puberty appear in a child, or when he reaches the age of full fifteen years, that will be the time, he will be considered legally mature.

Still, after his having attained physical maturity, it will be seen whether or not he has acquired the ability to protect his property and spend out of it correctly and satisfactorily. If this ability is found in him, his property should be entrusted to him. If he does not seem to have that ability in him at that time, it is the responsibility of the guardian to keep protecting his property until the age of twenty five years. At any time during this period, whenever he picks up the ability to protect his property and manage his living through business or vocation, his property can be handed over to him. And if - even upto the



age of twenty five years, such ability does not show up in him - then, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, his property should, after all, be given to him, but this would be subject to the condition that this lack of ability on his part should have not reached the limits of insanity. And, according to some Imāms, his property should not be entrusted in his hands even then, instead of which, the Qaḍī or Judge of an Islamic Court should entrust the responsibility of protecting his property to a trustworthy and responsible person.

Once again, what has been said here is based on a statement of the Holy Qur‘ān appearing in another verse where it was said: **فَإِنْ أُنْتَبِهُتُمْ مِنْهُمْ** (... if you perceive in them proper understanding, hand over to them their property - 4:6). It means: When the orphaned children become mature and you see in them the ability to protect their property by themselves and invest it gainfully, entrust the property to them. This verse has told us that becoming mature is not sufficient as justification for entrusting the property of the orphan to him, instead, it is conditioned by the ability to protect property and to invest it gainfully.

### **The Seventh Prohibition : Weighing and Measuring Short**

The seventh command in this verse is to give full weight and full measure in all fairness. The word: **بِالْقِسْطِ** (*bi al-qist*), translated as ‘in all fairness,’ applies to a transaction in which the giver does not decrease anything from what is due to be received by the other party - and the receiver does not take anything more than what is due to come to him from the giver (Ruh al-Ma‘ani).

Weighing and measuring short in common give and take of things has been sternly forbidden by the Qur‘ān. Severe warning to those who do that appears in Sūrah Al-Muṭaffifīn (83).

Commentator of the Qur‘ān, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās **رضى الله عنه** reports that, addressing those who weigh and measure in business, the Holy Prophet **صلى الله عليه وسلم** said: Weighing and measuring is a line of duty being unfair in which has caused many communities before you to be destroyed by Divine punishment (so, be fully cautious in this matter). (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

## Officials and Workers who fall short in Set Duties come under this Qur’anic Ruling

It should be borne in mind that weighing and measuring short called “*Taṭfīf*” in the Qur’ān is not simply restricted to weighing short and measuring less. In fact, falling short in giving the other person his right is also included under ‘*Taṭfīf*’ as illustrated by a report from Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه appearing in the Mu’aṭṭa’ of Imām Mālīk. When Sayyidnā ‘Umar noticed someone making the required movements of his Ṣalāh short, he said: ‘You made ‘*Taṭfīf*,’ meaning thereby that he did not fulfill the right of Ṣalāh as it was due and obligatory. After having reported this incident, Imām Mālīk says: *لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَفَاءٌ وَتَكْوِينٌ*, that is, giving the full measure due, and giving short of it, applies to everything, and not in weights and measures only.

This tells us that an employee who does not discharge his duties as required, steals time or delays work; and a wage earner who falls short in delivering the service agreed to; and for that matter anyone - a minister of government or his peon, an assistant in an office, or a scholar or religious worker - shall all be included under the Qur’anic term, “*Al-Muṭaffifīn*,” if they fall short in fulfilling the right of others due against them.

After that, it was said: *لَا نَكْفِيكَ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وَسَعَهَا* (We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity). In some narrations of *Ḥadīth*, it has been explained as a hint of exception, that is, a person who does everything possible within his control to give full consideration to the need of giving full weight and measure as due and, in case, some insignificant increase or decrease takes place inadvertently, then, that would stand excused because that is beyond his power and control.

According to Tafsīr Mazharī, the addition of this sentence in between indicates that it is better to give a little more while fulfilling what is due so that there remains no doubt of being short in giving - as it was when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, on a similar occasion, ordered a person weighing: *زِنْ وَارْجِحْ* (*zin wa arjih*) that is, ‘weigh and be liberal’ (literally, weigh and tilt the balance in favour of the receiver). (Ahmad, Abū Dāwūd, and Tirmidhī following a narration of Sayyidnā Suwayd ibn Qaiys)

And this was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. Whenever he had a right of someone due against him, and when came the time for him to pay it back, he liked to pay more than what the right of the other person was. Then, there is a Ḥadīth in Al-Bukhārī based on a narration by Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said:

‘May the mercy of Allah Ta‘ālā be on the person who is lenient when selling by giving more than the due; and is also lenient by not taking more than the due - instead, accepts in good grace, even if it happens to be somewhat short of it.’

But, this is an ethical rule - that one gives more when giving and, accepts less when taking, avoids a quarrel. There is nothing legal involved here which would compel one to do so. It is to point out to this very aspect that it was said in the Qur‘ān that “We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity.” In other words, giving the other person more than it was his due; and to be satisfied with any decrease in what was one’s own due, was not a mandatory command because it is not easy for common people to do so.

### **The Eighth Commandment :**

#### **BE JUST - Doing Otherwise is Ḥarām**

The verse says: وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَى (and when you speak, be just, even if there be a relative). It will be noticed that nothing particular has been mentioned at this place. Therefore, the majority of commentators hold the view that the statement includes everything said - whether it is a witness given in some case, or a judgement from a judge, or an order from a ruling official, or whatever different kinds of things said to each other. About all such things, the command of the Qur‘ān is that one should abide by the criterion of truth and justice when saying what one has to say - everywhere, on all occasions and under all conditions. As for the sense of abiding by truth and justice when appearing as a witness in some case, it is fairly obvious - that is, the witness should tell what he knows for certain - frankly and clearly - without adding or subtracting one word on his own, or injecting his guess or conjecture in it, or worrying about whom it would benefit and whom it would hurt. Similar is the situation of a judge who has to decide a case. He will examine witnesses according to the Islamic legal

norms, take what they offer and look at them in conjunction with what stands proved through other kinds of approaches and, then, give his decision. Be it a witness, or be it a judgement, nothing should stop one from saying what is right, true and just - not friendship and love, not enmity and hostility, nothing. For this reason, added here was the sentence: *وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ* (even if there be a relative). It means: Even if the person, in whose case you are appearing as a witness, or a judge, be a relative of yours - even then, you should not let truth and justice slip out of your hands, neither in witness, nor in the judgement.

The purpose in this verse is to stop false witness and unjust judgement. About false witness, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah have reported the following saying of the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*:

‘False witness is equal to Shirk’. He said it three times and, then, recited this verse:

فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ حَقًّا لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُسْرِكِينَ بِهِ

So, avoid the filth of idols, and avoid saying the false, being upright for Allah, without being associators (of partners) with Him - 22:30.

Similarly, about deciding against truth and justice, there is a saying of the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* which has been reported by Abū Dāwūd on the authority of a narration by Sayyidnā Buraydah ibn Huṣayb *رضى الله عنه*. It says:

‘There are three kinds of Qaḍīs (judges): One of them would go to *Jannah* while the other two, to *Jahannam*. The one who arrived at the truth by investigating into the case according to the Sharī‘ah, then gave his decision in the light of the truth, he belongs in *Jannah* - and he who investigated and did find out the truth, but knowingly gave his judgement against it, his place is in Hell. And similarly, a Qaḍī who did not know, or fell short on investigation and deliberation, and gave a decision in that state of ignorance, he too will go to *Jahannam*.’

The same subject has appeared in other verses of the Holy Qur‘ān more explicitly and emphatically, enjoining that there should be no trace or effect of friendship, kinship or any other relation based on mutual interest - or enmity and hostility - in witness, or judgement. For

example, in Sūrah An-Nisā,’ it was said:

وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ

(‘O those who believe, be upholder of justice - witnesses for Allah) ‘even though against yourselves or the parents and the relatives.’ - 4:135.

In the same vein, there is another command given in Sūrah al-Ma‘idah which says:

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا

(O those who believe, be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice). ‘And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice’ - 5:8.

It means that enmity with a people should not make you willing to witness or to judge against the dictate of justice. Finally, as for upholding truth and justice in matters other than witness and judgement, such as, mutual conversations referred to earlier, the best policy is not to lie, not to speak ill of anyone behind his back, not to say anything which would hurt others, or cause physical or financial loss to anyone.

### **The Ninth Command: To Fulfill the Covenant of Allah - i.e., Breach of Pledge is Ḥarām**

The ninth command given in this verse is to fulfill the covenant of Allah and avoid breaking the solemn pledge given. It was said: وَيَعْهَدِ اللَّهُ (and fulfill the covenant of Allah). The ‘covenant of Allah’ could mean the pledge that was taken from every human being at the beginning of life when all human beings were asked: أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ? (‘Am I not your *Rabb*, your Lord?’). All of them said: بلى (‘*Bala*’:yes), that is, ‘there is no doubt that You are our *Rabb*, our Lord.’ This pledge demands but that we do not disobey any command given by our Lord, our creator, cherisher, nurturer and caretaker. Consider everything He has asked to do at the level of the highest possible priority and take it to be the most important of all that we do. And as for things He has asked us not to do, we should not go even near them - even stay away from falling in doubts about them. Thus, the essence of this covenant is that we should obey Allah Ta‘ālā totally and perfectly.

It is also possible that ‘covenant’ here means the particular pledges

mentioned in the Qur‘ān on different occasions - out of which are these verses the Tafsīr of which is before you (and in which ten injunctions have been described emphatically).

‘*Ulama* say that, in this pledge, included there is the fulfilling of vows (*nadhr* or *mannat*), a way through which one gives a pledge to Allah Ta‘ālā that he or she would do something. In another verse of the Holy Qur‘ān, this has also been mentioned more explicitly by saying: **يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ** that is, ‘the righteous servants of Allah fulfill their *nadhr* (vow).’

In short, it can be said that this command is, though ninth in the series, but in terms of its reality, it encompasses all imperatives and prohibitions of Islamic legal injunctions.

It will be noticed that, at the end of this second verse (152) too, there appears a sentence of persuasion, that is: **ذِكْرِكُمْ وَضَعِكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ** (This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may observe the advice).

Then comes the third verse (153) where the tenth injunction has been described as follows: **وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ** (And: This is My path [headed] straight. So, follow it, and do not follow the [other] ways, lest it should take you away from His way).

In this verse, the word: **هَذَا** (*hādha*:this) denotes the religion of Islam, or the Qur‘ān. Also possible is that the reference may be to Sūrah Al-An‘ām itself because, here too, the full range of the fundamentals of Islam - *Tauhīd*, *Risālah* and principles governing injunctions of the Shari‘ah - find mention. As for the word: **مُسْتَقِيمًا** (*mustaqīm*), it is a distinctive adjunct of this path of the religion of Islam and which has been used as an adverb in the syntactical arrangement to indicate that being ‘*mustaqīm*’ (straight) is an integral attribute of Islam as a religion. After that, it was said: **فَاتَّبِعُوهُ** (So, follow it). It means: ‘When you have come to know that the religion of Islam is My path, and that alone is the straight path, you have before you the only path headed towards the desired destination, therefore, this is the path you shall follow.’

After that, it was said: **وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ** (and do not follow the [other] ways, lest it should take you away from His way). The

word: سُبُل (*subul*) is the plural form of *sabīl* which also means ‘way.’ The sense of the statement is that the real and true way of reaching Allah Ta‘ālā, and achieving His pleasure (*riḍā*) is just one. But, people in this world have carved out different ways on their own depending on what they think it is, or should be. The advice being given is: You do not follow any of these ways because these ways are really not the ways to reach Allah and therefore, whoever walks these ways shall go astray far away from the path of Allah.

It is said in Tafsīr Mazḥarī that the purpose of sending the Qur‘ān and the Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم is to make people subordinate their ideas, intentions and proposals to the Qur‘ān and Sunnah and cast their lives into the blessed model offered by them. But, what is happening is that people are bent on moulding the Qur‘ān and Sunnah into the frame of their ideas and proposals. As a result, an *Āyah* of the Qur‘ān, or a *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which does not meet their fancy, or is found to be contrary to what they would like it to be, would become the target of their so-called enterpretation until it fits into the mold of their desires. This is the starting point from where emerge other ways which lead people astray - ways which throw them in doubts and innovations in established religion (*shubḥāt* and *bid‘āt*). These are the ways from which people have been instructed to stay away in this verse.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضى الله عنه, there is a report in Musnad of Dārimī which says: ‘Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ drew a vertical line and said: “This is the path of Allah.” Then, he drew other lines on its right and left and said: “These are *subul*” (that is, the ways following which has been prohibited in this verse) and, then, he said: “Set upon every one of these ways there is a Shayṭān who, after enticing people away from the straight path, welcomes them to this” (the ways under the charge of Shayṭān, as shown in the drawing). After that, as proof, he recited this verse (153).’

Then, once again towards the end of the verse, it was said: ذُرِّكُمْ وَرَضِكُمْ بِكُمْ لَعَنَّاكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (That is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may be God-fearing).

This completes the Tafsīr of these three verses and the ten prohibitions delineated therein. Finally, have a look at the significant style

the Holy Qur'an employs when described at this place were ten injunctions. They do not appear here as ten Articles of Law, something modern law books would love to do. Instead of doing something like that, first it describes five injunctions, then says: **ذِكْرُكُمْ وَرِضْوَانُكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ** (That is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may understand). Then, after having described four more injunctions, it repeats the same sentence with the difference that it says: **تَذَكَّرُونَ** (observe the advice) in place of: **تَعْقِلُونَ** (understand) at the end. And after that, described there is the last injunction in a separate *Āyah* (verse), and once again, repeated there is the same core sentence with the difference that said here is: **تَتَّقُونَ** (be God-fearing) in place of: **تَذَكَّرُونَ** (observe the advice) at the end.

There are many elements of wisdom in this subtle style of the Holy Qur'an:

First of all, the Holy Qur'an is not simply a coercive law like the usual laws of this world. In fact, it is a law which is genuinely generous and patronizing in the essential sense. That is why, with every law, suggestions are given which would make them come easy. Then, knowing Allah Ta'ālā and having the concern for 'Ākhirah are the most effective enforcers of law, in public or in private, and are the only solution human beings have in their problems with law. Therefore, at the end of all the three verses, introduced there are words which would steer human orientation away from the material world and fix it towards Allah Ta'ālā and the 'Ākhirah.

There are five injunctions described in the first verse (151), that is: (1) To avoid Shirk, (2) to avoid being disobedient to parents, (3) To avoid killing children, (4) To avoid shameful acts, and (5) to avoid killing unjustly. What is used at their end is the word: **تَعْقِلُونَ** (understand) because the people of *Jāhiliyyah* just did not think that there was anything wrong with them. Therefore, it was suggested that they would do well by forsaking their blind following of ancestral customs and their own whims, if they used a little reason.

The second verse (152) describes four injunctions, that is: (1) Not to eat up the property of the orphan by false means, (2) not to weigh or measure short, (3) to be true and just in speech, and (4) to fulfill the covenant of Allah.



These are things, even these ignorant ones knew to be necessary - some of them would even act likewise. But, mostly these were not heeded to. The only remedy of heedlessness is what is called: تَذَكُّرٌ (tazkirah:remembrance) that is, the remembrance of Allah and 'Ākhirah. Therefore, at the end of this verse, the word used was: تَذَكَّرُونَ (observe the advice).

The third verse (153) contains the instruction to follow the straight path and to avoid doing the contrary by following other ways. Since, there is nothing more authentic but the fear of Allah which would tear a human being away from the clutches of his misguiding thoughts and desires, therefore, at the end of it, said there was: لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (so that you may be God-fearing).

Finally, at all these three places, the word used was: وَصِيَّةٌ (waṣīyyah) which is an order to do something. Therefore, as cited earlier, some noble *Sahābah* رضى الله عنهم اجمعين said: Whoever wishes to see the sealed will and testament of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let him recite these three verses.

### Verses 154 - 157

ثُمَّ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيلًا  
 لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾  
 وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ  
 ﴿١٥٥﴾ أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ عَلَي طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا  
 وَإِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغَفَلِينَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا لَوْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْ  
 عَلَيْنَا الْكِتَابَ لَكُنَّا أَهْدَى مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ  
 وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَبَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا  
 سَنَجْزِي الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا  
 يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Then We gave Musa the Book, complete for the one who does good, and explaining everything in detail, and a

guidance and a mercy, so that they may believe in meeting their Lord. [154]

And this is a blessed Book We have sent down. So follow it and fear Allah, so that you may be favoured with mercy, [155] lest you should say, “The Book was sent down only upon two groups before us, and we were ignorant of what they studied.” [156] Or you should say, “If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been more adhering to the right path than they.” Now there has come to you a clear sign from your Lord, and a guidance and a mercy. So, who is more unjust than the one who belies the verses of Allah and turns away from them? We will recompense those who turn away from Our verses with an evil punishment, because of their turning away. [157]

### Commentary

The reason of being ‘ignorant of (or heedless to) what they studied - 156’ was not that the Torah and the Injīl were non-existent in the Arabic language because it is possible to become informed of the contents through a translation, in fact, this happens. Instead, this is because the people of the Book never took steps to educate and inform the people of Arabia in the mores of monotheism. That something falls within hearing distance casually is customarily ineffective as a meaningful warning - though, this much note of warning makes search and consideration obligatory, and on this basis, the coming of Divine punishment against the abandonment of *Tauhīd* (the belief in the Oneness of Allah) was possible. However, this raises no doubts about the universal nature of the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā ‘Isā عليهما السلام, because the particularization of this universality of message is with our master, may the blessing of Allah be upon him, and peace - and this particularization is in terms of the totality of fundamentals and subsidiaries, otherwise, in fundamentals, following all prophets is obligatory on all peoples. So, the punishment would have been proper on this basis. But, this would have been an excuse advanced initially. Now that too is no more valid. The argument of Allah is already established.

As for their second saying: *لَوْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لَكُنَّا أَهْلَىٰ مِنْهُمْ* (‘If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been more adhering to the

right path than they’), a question and its answer has already appeared under the commentary on verse 19 of Sūrah A-Mā‘idah earlier in this volume. This concerns the hope of salvation during the period of *Fa-trah* or gap between prophets.

### Verse 158

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ  
بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ ۗ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا  
إِيمَانُهَا كَمْ تَكُنْ أَمِنْتُ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا ۗ  
قُلْ أَنْتَظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

They are waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them or comes your Lord or come some signs of your Lord. The day some signs of your Lord come, the believing of a person shall be of no use to him who had never believed before, or had not earned some good through his faith. Say, “Wait, of course, we are waiting.” [158]

### Commentary

The major portion of Sūrah Al-An‘ām has been revealed to correct the beliefs and deeds of the people of Makkah and the disbelievers of Arabia and to remove their doubts and to answer questions raised by them.

All through the Sūrah, specially in the previous verses, the people of Makkah and the rest of Arabia were given to understand that they had seen open signs and miracles at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They had heard about the prophecies of past books and prophets about him. Then, they had themselves listened to the recitation of the Qur‘ān from one totally unlettered (*Ummiyy*) - a standing miracle on its own. Now the avenues of truth lay open before them. The argument of Allah Ta‘ālā stood conclusively established against them. Believing was all they needed to do. What else could it be they were waiting for before they would do that?

This subject was eloquently put in the cited verse by saying:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ

(They are waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them or comes your Lord or come some signs of your Lord).

In other words, it means: 'Are these people waiting to believe only when the angels of death reach them, or are they waiting to be on the plains of Resurrection when Allah Ta'ālā will come to decide destinies, or are they waiting to see some last signs of the coming of the fateful Day of Doom. That the most exalted *Rabb* of all shall appear on the Judgement Day has been mentioned in several verses of the Holy Qur'an. Speaking in the same terms, a verse from Sūrah Al-Baqarah says:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ

They are looking forward to nothing but that Allah comes upon them in canopies of clouds with the angels and the matter is closed - 2:210.

The state in which Allah Ta'ālā shall appear on the Judgement Day cannot be conceived by human imagination. Therefore, in the case of such verses, the standard creed of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* and righteous elders of the Muslim *Ummah* is that one should believe in what has been mentioned in the Qur'an, have faith in it, then resign the matter of how it shall come to pass to Divine knowledge. For instance, in the case of the verse quoted above, one should be certain that Allah Ta'ālā will be present on the Day of Judgement - without having to worry about the state and orientation in which this would happen.

Next in the verse, it was said:

يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ آمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا حَيْرَاتٌ

(The day some signs of your Lord come, the believing of a person will be of no use to him who had never believed before, or had not earned some good through his faith).

The warning given here is that, as soon as some of these signs of Allah appear, the doors of *Taubah* (repentance) will be closed. Anyone who had not come to believe before this happens will find his or her declaration of faith after that as unacceptable. As for a person who had be-

lied before but had done nothing by way of good deeds will find that his or her act of *Taubah* and the resolve to be good in future deeds - after these signs - are not acceptable. In short, that will be ominous time when the *Taubah* of a disbeliever from his disbelief and the *Taubah* of a sinner from his sin and disobedience, even if offered, will not be accepted.

The reason is that *’Imān* (faith) and *Taubah* (repentance) can be accepted only upto the time it remains within the choice of a person. Once Divine punishment and the reality of the-life-to-come become open to perception, every human being stands compelled to believe and abstain from sin. A faith under duress and a repentance under threat are not acceptable.

There are many verses of the Qur‘ān which mention how the people condemned to Hell will start wailing on arrival there. They will make big promises that should they be returned back to the mortal world, they would do nothing but believe and be good in deeds. But, the answer given to them will be: The time for belief and deed is over. What you are saying now is because you have no other choice. This is not valid.

Explaining this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said : When comes the last among the signs of the *Qiyāmah* and the sun will rise from the West instead of the East seeing which the disbelievers of the whole world will start saying that they now believe. All those who had been disobedient will turn into the obedient ones. But, at that time, no believing and no repenting will remain worth accepting. (Al-Baghawī on authority from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah)

However, what we do know from the Qur‘ānic explanation is the fact that there will be the manifestation of some signs following which the door of *Taubah* (repentance) will be closed - no *Taubah* from a disbeliever or sinner will be accepted after that. But, the Qur‘ān itself has not made it clear as to what that sign is.

In the Tafsīr of this verse, there is a *Hadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

‘*Qiyāmah* will not stand established until passes the event

that the sun rises from the West. When people see this sign, they will all believe. This will be the time about which the Qur‘ān says - believing then will not benefit anyone.’

The following details about it have been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim as based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudayfah ibn Usayd رضى الله عنه: Once the *Ṣaḥābah* were talking among themselves about the signs of *Qiyāmah* when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came in. At that time, he said: *Qiyāmah* will not come in fact until you have seen ten signs: (1) The sun rising from the West, (2) a particular kind of smoke, (3) the animal of the earth, (4) the coming out of Gog and Magog, (5) the coming of ‘Īsā عليه السلام, (6) the coming of Anti-Christ (Dajjāl), (7) the sinking of land at three places - in the East ..., (8) in the West, and ... (9) in the Arabian Peninsula, and (10) a fire which will emerge from an abyss in Eden and will move driving people ahead of it.

And in the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Out of these signs, the first to come will be the rising of the sun from the West, and the appearance of the animal of the earth.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī, in his *Tazkirah*, and Ḥaḍīf ibn Ḥajar, in *Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*, while citing a narration from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه, have also reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: After this event, that is, after the rising of the sun from the West, the world will keep surviving for one hundred and twenty years. (Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī)

After these details, there is a question. According to authentic religious reports, when Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام will return to the world, he will invite people to believe. People would believe. Islam will become the religion of the world. It is obvious that, should believing at that time remain unacceptable, this call and the entry of people in the fold of Islam would become meaningless.

In *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, commentator Ālūsī answers this by saying that the event of the sun rising from the West will take place after the passage of a long time since the appearance of Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام - and that would be the time when the door of *Taubah* will close.

‘Allāmah Balqīnī and others say that it is not improbable that this

prohibition of faith and repentance being unacceptable, as tied with the rising of the sun from the West, may not remain operative through the last period. It could be that this restriction changes after the passage of some time, and faith and repentance start being acceptable again. (Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī) (Allah knows best)

To sum up, it can be said that: Though, the sign after the appearance of which *Taubah* will not be acceptable has not been clarified in the present verse, but, from the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has become evident that it means the rising of the sun from the West.

Then, remains the question: Why has the Qur‘ān itself left it unclarified? According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīt, the very ambiguity of the Qur‘ān at this place is more suited to the task of putting heedless human beings on alert so that they could draw their essential lesson from all forthcoming events of ominous nature and hasten to repent and correct their course of life.

In addition to that, in this ambiguity and brevity, there is the advantage that everyone will be alerted to the danger that the way the door of repentance shall be closed when the sun rises from the West for all human beings, the same way it happens in a miniaturized form when, for everyone personally and individually, the door of *Taubah* is shut close for one at the time of death. This phenomena has been described in another verse of the Holy Qur‘ān clearly as well:

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْفَنَّا

And *Taubah* is not accepted from those who keep committing sins until death visits one of them and they say, ‘now I repent - 4-18.’

Explaining this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إِنَّ تَوْبَةَ الْعَبْدِ تُقْبَلُ مَا لَمْ يُعْرِغْ

The *Taubah* of a servant of Allah continues being accepted until comes the agony of death (when Rūḥ comes into the throat and creates a recognizable, parting, hurtling, sound).

This tells us that at the time when man is taking his last breath

and the soul is about to depart from the body - since angels of death come in sight - even then, repentance is not accepted. It is obvious enough that this state of affairs too is a significant sign from Allah. Therefore, included under this verse is this time of death as well - as it is also in the saying of some ‘*Ulamā*’ and other pious elders reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ: مَنْ مَاتَ فَقَدْ كَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهُ that is, ‘whoever dies, his Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*) has dawned at that very instant.’ This is so because the place and time of deeds is all over. What one expects in return for his deeds in his mortal life, he would start seeing a sample from it right from the time he has been lowered into his grave. The Persian poet, Ṣā‘ib has put it pithily in poetry:

توبه بارا نفس باز پسین دست زدست    بیخبر دیر رسیدی درمحمل بستند

Your repentance after the last breath stands rejected

Unaware man, you are late, the door of the beloved is closed.

Worth noting here is the nuance of the Arabic language in that it was first said in the verse: أَوْ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ (or come some signs of your Lord) and then, by repeating the same sentence, it was said: يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيمَانُهَا (The day come some signs of your Lord, the believing of a person shall be of no use to him). It will be noticed that no pronoun has been used here to make the statement brief. This seems to suggest that: ‘بَعْضُ آيَاتِ’ (*Ba‘du Āyāt*: some signs) mentioned first are not the same as those mentioned in: ‘بَعْضُ آيَاتِ’ (*Ba‘du Āyāt*: some signs) of the second sentence, that is, they are different from each other. This may be a hint towards the substance of the narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah ibn Usayd رضى الله عنه you have read a little earlier in which he has enumerated ten important signs of the coming of *Qiyāmah*, the last of them being the rising of the sun from the West which is symbolic of the discontinuation of the acceptance of *Taubah*.

At the end of the verse, it was said: قُلْ إِنظِرُونَا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ (Say, “Wait, of course, we are waiting”). The address here is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being asked to tell those people that they, despite the arguments of Allah conclusively established against them, still wish to wait for death or the Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*), then, they are welcome to it. They can wait if they must. As for us, we too shall be waiting to see what their *Rabb* decides to do with them.



## Verses 159 - 160

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيعًا أَنتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ  
 إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ مَنْ  
 جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرٌ مِمثَلِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا  
 يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

**Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah alone; then He will tell them what they have been doing. [159]**

**Whoever comes with a good deed, receives ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed, he will not be recompensed by anything but its equal, and they shall not be wronged. [160]**

**Commentary**

As pointed out earlier, a major portion of Sūrah Al-An'ām is devoted to addressing the disbelievers of Makkah and answering questions asked by them. They were told that the straight path to Allah was following the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Before him, during the time of past prophets, salvation depended on following their books and code of laws. The same thing is true today. Today, salvation lies in following nothing but the Shari'ah brought by him. So, they were asked to become reasonable, take the straight path and avoid exchanging it with paths of error right and left. If they did that, they were warned, these ways of error will throw them far away from the way of Allah.

The first (159) of the two verses carries a general address included wherein are the disbelievers of Arabia, the Jews and Christians and Muslims, all of them. Addressing them, stated there is the sad end of those who turn away from the straight path of Allah - and the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is that he should have nothing to do with those who take to the ways of error. Then, out of these, there are those ways of error which take one in a direction totally opposite to what the straight path is, such as the ways of the disbe-

lievers, polytheists and the people of the Book. Then, there are other ways too, which do not, though, take one all the way in the opposite direction, but misguide them any way by pulling them away from the straight path and putting them on ways to the right and left. These are ways of 'doubts' and 'innovations' in the true and settled faith (*Shubhāt* and *Bid‘āt*). They too lead one astray.

So, it was said: **إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيعًا لَسْتُ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِأَنَّ كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ** (Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah alone; then He will tell them what they have been doing).

In this verse, made clear first was that the Messenger of Allah was free of any responsibility concerning those who land themselves into the ways of error. The noble Prophet, may the blessings of Allah, and peace be upon him, had nothing to do with them. Then, they were given the notice of warning that their case was, sufficient to say, in the hands of Allah Ta‘ālā, and it was He who would punish them on the day of *Qiyāmah*.

As for 'having made divisions in religion and turning into factions' mentioned in the verse is concerned, it refers to the practice of not following the basic principles of established religion, rather electing to follow personal whims and desires, or become willing victims of Satanic instigations and deceptions, as an outcome of which, one would add something new to it, or leave some of that which is already there.

### **Stern Warnings against Making Additions in Established Religion**

According to *Tafsīr Mazharī*, included here are the peoples of the past communities as well, those who had abandoned their basic religion and had added to it things on their own - and with them, there are the deviators and innovators (the partisans of *Bid‘ah*) of this *Ummah* too, who keep adding baseless things, on their own, into the *Dīn* of Islam. About this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

'My *Ummah* will face the same conditions faced by the Banī *Isrā‘īl*. The kind of evil practices in which they got involved will also affect the people of my *Ummah*. The Banī *Isrā‘īl* had split into seventy two sects. My *Ummah* will break up into

seventy three sects - all of them will go to Hell, except one. The *Ṣaḥābah* asked about the group which would be so blessed with salvation. He said: 'مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي' (*mā anā ‘alaihi wa aṣḥābī*: That on which am I and my Companions) - that is, the collective body of people which follows my way and the way of my *Ṣaḥābah* will be blessed with salvation. (This narration from Sayyidnā ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه has been reported by Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd)

Al-Ṭabarānī has reported on sound authority from Sayyidnā Fārūq al-‘Azam رضى الله عنه that he told Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها that the sects mentioned in this verse are the people of Bid‘ah (innovators in established religion) who, following their whims and desires, invent new ways in religion. The same view has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه with sound authority. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has emphatically prohibited the invention and introduction of new methods in religion on one’s own.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Al-‘Irbād ibn Sāriyah, Imām Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and others have reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

‘Those who live after me will see many differences. Therefore, (I order you that) you should, abiding by my *Sunnah* (way) and the *Sunnah* of my rightly-guided successors (*Khulafā’ ar-Rāshidīn*) strictly, keep doing what you do while adhering to nothing but these, avoid the temptation of falling for new methods because everything introduced anew into the religion is *Bid‘ah*, and every *Bid‘ah* is error and straying.’

In another *Ḥadīth*, he said: ‘One who stood separated from the *Jamā‘ah*, even to the measure of a span between the extended thumb and the little finger, he has taken out the band of allegiance to Islam from around his neck. (Abū Dāwūd and Aḥmad)

According to *Tafsīr Maḥzarī*, ‘*Jamā‘ah*’ in this *Ḥadīth* means ‘the *Jamā‘ah* of *Ṣaḥābah*,’ that is, the collective body or group of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The reason is that Allah Ta‘ālā sent our master, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa صلى الله عليه وسلم as His *Rasūl*, and gave him the *Qur‘ān*, and blessed him with another (kind of) *Waḥy* (revelation) - which is called the *Ḥadīth* or *Sunnah*. Then, there

are many difficult or brief or ambiguous verses in the Qur‘ān. For their Tafsīr or explanation, Allah Ta‘ālā promised that He shall have these clarified through His *Rasūl*. The statement: *ثُمَّ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَا نَسَبْتُمْ* (After that, to make it clear to you is on Us - 75:19) means exactly this.

So, the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* explained the difficulties and ambiguities of the Qur‘ān and groomed his direct disciples, that is, the *Ṣaḥābah* into the many modes of his *Sunnah* through his word and deed. Therefore, the conduct of the *Ṣaḥābah* as a major collective entity (placed by Divine design into a trail-blazing role as mirrors of their blessed master) is in itself the statement and the explanation of the Divinely-ordained Shari‘ah of Islam.

Therefore, it is the good fortune of a Muslim that he or she should follow the *Kitāb* of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the *Rasūl* of Allah - and whenever one faces a doubt in the meaning of an ‘*Āyah* of the Qur‘ān or the sense of a *Ḥadīth*, one should go by the meaning and sense preferred by the noble *Ṣaḥābah*.

Unfortunately, as a result of people ignoring this sacrosanct rule of conduct, Islam had to see the emergence of different sects which would set aside the proven conduct and explanations of the *Ṣaḥābah* and take the liberty of saying what they wished and declare it to be the very meaning of the Qur‘ān and *Sunnah*. These are the ways of error the Holy Qur‘ān has repeatedly warned against and the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* has emphatically prohibited it throughout his blessed life, at times, even castigated those acting against this rule with *la‘nah*.

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah Aṣ-Ṣiddīqah *رضي الله عنها* reports that the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* said that on six persons he casts his *la‘nah*, and may the *la‘nah* of Allah be upon them: (1) The person who has added something to the Book of Allah from his side (that is, whether added some words, or carried the meaning to such excessive limits as is contrary to the *Tafsīr* of the *Ṣaḥābah*), (2) the person who has denied the Divinely-ordained destiny, (3) the person who hoists himself into a position of authority over the Muslim *Ummah* by force (or deceit) so that he would honour the person disgraced by Allah, and disgrace the person given honour by Allah, (4) the person who took as Ḥalāl what Allah had made Ḥarām, that is, indulged in killing at the sacred precincts of the Ḥarām in Makkah, or, hunted there, (5) the person who

dishonoured my family and children, and (6) the person who abandoned my *Sunnah*.

Said in the second (160) verse is: *مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا بِمِثْلِهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ* (Whoever comes with a good deed, receives ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed, he will not be recompensed by anything but its equal, and they shall not be wronged).

Stated in the previous verse (159) was that the punishment for the evil deeds of those who turn away from the straight path rested with Allah alone.

In the present verse, the generous procedure of reward and punishment in the Hereafter has been described by saying that a person who does one good deed will get ten times more in return - and a person who commits one sin, the return for him will be equal to that of one sin.

As reported in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim and in *Nasā’ī* and the *Musnad* of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* said: Most Exalted and Very Merciful is your *Rabb*. A person who intends to do a good deed has one good recorded in his Book of Deeds - even if he does not get around to do it. Following that, when he gets to do that good deed, ten good deeds are recorded in his Book of Deeds. And if a person intends to do a sin, then stays back and does not do it, still a good is recorded for him - and if he were to actually commit a sin, still what he gets registered in his name is one sin, or that too is erased. With this showering of grace and mercy in the presence of Allah, who can apprehend total destruction? Unless, of course, there be that rare person who is determined to be destroyed. (Ibn Kathīr)

In a *Ḥadīth Qudsī* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr *رضى الله عنه*, it is said:

‘A person who does one good deed gets the reward of ten, even more - and a person who commits one sin will get its punishment equal to one sin only, or I shall forgive even that. And a person who comes to Me with sins which would fill the whole earth, and still seeks forgiveness, I shall treat him with matching forgiveness. And a person who comes closer towards

Me to the measure of one hand finger-span, I step one hand-span towards him. And a person who steps one hand-span toward Me, I come towards him by the measure of one Bā’ (the stretch of both hands). And the person who comes walking towards Me, towards him I come running.’

From these *Ḥadīth* narrations, we can see that the increase of ten times for one good deed as mentioned in this verse is actually a description of its base limit - and Allah Ta‘ālā, in His mercy and generosity, may give even more than that, and shall give, as proved by other narrations which place it upto the level of seventy times or seven hundred times.

In the words of the verse, it is noteworthy that the expression used is: *جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ* (‘comes with a good deed’) and not: *عَمِلَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ* (does a good deed). According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, this indicates that such reward or punishment will not be awarded just on having done something good or bad. Instead of that, the condition is that to deserve reward or punishment, a good or bad deed must survive as such until the time of death. The outcome is that a person who has done a good deed, but it gets destroyed because of the misfortune of some sin, then, he no longer remains deserving of reward against this deed. An example of it is, God forbid, that of *Shirk* and *Kufr* which, in fact, destroy all good deeds. In addition to that there are many other sins which make some good deeds turn false and ineffectual - as it appears in the Holy Qur’an: *لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى* (do not nullify your charities by boasting about favour, and teasing -2:264).

This tells us that the good deed of charity (*ṣadaqah*) gets nullified and wasted by boasting about the favour done or by causing hurt through teasing and underrating the recipient. Similarly, it appears in *Ḥadīth* that sitting in the *Masjid* and talking about worldly things eats up good deeds as fire eats up the wood. This tells us that good deeds, such as, *Nafl*, *Tasbīḥ* and *Dhikr*, go to waste by indulging in mundane conversation.

Similar is the case of evil deeds which, if repented from, become the cause of the sin being erased from the Book of Deeds - it does not keep sticking to a person until the time of death. Therefore, not said in the verse was something like: ‘does any deed, good or bad, for which

there will be punishment or reward.’ Instead, what was said, in effect, was: Whoever brings to Us a good deed will get a reward ten times as much and whoever brings to Us an evil deed, then, it will be only one deed he will be punished for. The point is that this act of bringing to Allah Ta‘ālā can become possible only when this deed remains intact and unharmed right through the end. The crucial thing is that it survives, that nothing happens in between which will cause the good deed to be spoiled or wasted - and of course, the method is to keep repenting and seeking the forgiveness of Allah Ta‘ālā from falling into any evil deed.

At the end of the verse, it was said: **وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ** (and they shall not be wronged). It means that this is no human court. This is the Highest of the high. No probability of any injustice to anyone exists there, nor can there be a decrease in the return for someone’s good deed, nor is there any possibility of an increase in the punishment for someone’s evil deed.

#### Verses 161 - 165

قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَيْتُنِي رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ۖ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِثْلَ  
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي  
 وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لَا شَرِيكَ  
 لَهُ ۚ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ  
 أَبْغَىٰ رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۗ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا  
 عَلَيْهَا ۗ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۗ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ  
 فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ  
 خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوكُمْ فِي  
 مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ ۗ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

Say, “As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path: the straight religion, the faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners with Allah. [161]

Say, “My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [162] For Him there is no partner. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first one to submit.” [163]

Say, “Should I seek a lord other than Allah when He is the Lord of everything? And nobody does anything but to his own account, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another, then to your Lord is your return. Then He will tell you about what you were disputing in. [164]

And it is He who made you the viceregents of the earth and raised some of you in ranks over others, so that He may test you in what He has given you. Surely, your Lord is swift in punishing and - surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [165]

### Commentary

These are the last five verses of Sūrah Al-An‘ām. It will be recalled from previous verses how people had altered the true religion through a process of excess and deficiency, making many more out of it, and had themselves split into factions and groups. In contrast, the first three of the present verses present an authentic profile of the true religion describing its fundamental principles, and some important subsidiaries and details. The first two verses carry the principle while the third mentions their subsidiaries - and in both, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم where he has been asked to convey the message to these people.

In the first verse it has been said: **قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَيْتَنِي رَبِّيَ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ** (As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path). The hint given here is that he has not taken this path prompted like them by their own ideas or under the weight of ancestral customs. Instead of that, this is a way to which he has been directed by his Lord. Then, by using the word: **رب** (*Rabb*, the essential nurturer, benefactor and carer under all conditions, unfortunately not expressed through any equivalent in English), it was indicated that it is the very dictate of His beneficence that He guides to the right path. Those who look for guidance will have guidance from Him.

In the second verse (162), it was said: **دِينًا قِيمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ**



(the straight religion, the faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners with Allah). Here, the word: قِيَامٌ (*qiyām*) is a verbal noun in the sense of: قِيَامٌ (*qiyām*) meaning what stands established on strong and secure foundation. In other words, this religion is fortified. It stands on God-sent basics. This is no compedium of someone's personal ideas. Then, it is not some strange new religion either lending itself to doubting eyebrows. This has been the religion of all past prophets, may peace be upon them all. That the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been particularly mentioned here is because all religions in the world admit his greatness and religious patriarchy. Among the groups of the time, the Jews, the Christians and the disbelievers of Arabia - no matter how different from each other they may be - they were still unanimous in paying homage to the great spiritual station of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. And this spiritual station of leadership has been given to him by Allah Ta‘ālā as a special reward: إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا (I am going to make you an Imām for the people - 2:124).

Then, every sect from them tried to prove that they were staunch adherents of the religion of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and were part of his Community. To remove their misgiving, it was said that Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had the distinction of always abstaining from bowing before anyone other than Allah and he had a distaste for all kinds of *Shirk* which led people to associate partners in His pristine Divinity. This conduct was the greatest achievement of his life. In sharp contrast to him, here you are all soaked in *Shirk*. Everyone took someone as partners with Allah - the Jews did that with Sayyidnā ‘Uzayr رضى الله عنه, the Christians with Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام and the disbelievers of Arabia were so liberal that they took thousands of rocks to be partners in the Divinity of Allah. In this state of affairs, no one had the right to claim that they were adhering to the ideal of the spiritual community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - except Muslims. They shun *Shirk* and *Kufr*.

In the third verse (163), it was said: قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (Say, "My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds). The word: نُسُكٌ (*nusuk*) in this verse means sacrifice. Everything one does in Ḥajj is also called: *Nusuk*. So, the rites of Ḥajj are known as *Manāsik*, the plural of *Nusuk*. Then, this word is also used for *Ibadah* or worship of Allah in the absolute sense.

Therefore, *Nāsik* is used in the sense of 'Ābid (one who worships Allah). At this place, any of the meanings given above can be applied. *Tafsīrs* to that effect have been reported from commentators among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn*. But, 'Ibādah or offering of acts of worship devoted to Allah, taken in the absolute sense, appears to be the more appropriate meaning at this place. In that case, the meaning of the verse would be: 'My prayer, my offerings in 'Ibādah, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.'

Out of the subsidiaries of deeds, the first to be mentioned here was *Ṣalāh* because that is the moving spirit of all good deeds and is, of course, the pillar of the religion. Mentioned briefly after that were all deeds and acts of worship. Then, rising to a wider level, everything done or faced in a lifetime was pointed to. The last to be mentioned was death. After having identified all these, it was admitted that they are only for Allah who is the Lord of all the worlds and who has no associate or partner in His Divinity. And this is the outcome of perfect faith and perfect sincerity. This leads one to think, care and keep in sight, in all states of life and in everything one does, that: 'my *Rabb*, and the *Rabb* of the whole wide world is One *Rabb*. I am His servant. I am in His sight - all the time. Let not my heart, my mind, my eyes, my ears, my tongue, and hands, and feet, nor my pen or step, move in any direction against His pleasure.' This is a simple meditation (*Murāqabah*) of the highest order, something which, if one trains himself to keep present in one's heart and mind, then, there is no doubt that he or she will become a human being in the real sense. Things like sin and disobedience and crimes will be scared to come anywhere even close to a person that strong.

In *Tafsīr Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr*, under the commentary on this verse, it has been reported that the well-known *Ṣaḥābi*, Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Al-Ash'arī رضى الله عنه used to say: "I honestly wish that every Muslim would keep reciting this verse time and again, almost making it the constant formula of his or her life."

In this verse, the statement - that the prayers and the rest of acts of worship are for Allah - very obviously means that these should be free from any *Shirk* or hypocrisy or any other worldly interest. As for life and death being for Allah, it could also mean : 'When my very life

and death are in His control, then, what I do in my physical and spiritual life (*a‘mal and ‘ibādāt*), has to be for Him alone.’ And it could also mean: ‘Whatever deeds are tied with life are for Allah alone - such as, *Ṣalāh, Ṣawm*, rights and duties involved in dealings with people etc. Then, deeds which relate to death - such as, a will (*waṣiyyah*) and the concept of an ideal life one longs for - then, they too are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and subordinate to what He has commanded.’

After that it was said: *وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ* (And this I have been commanded and I am the first one to submit). It means that ‘in this *Ummah*, I am the first Muslim’ - because the first Muslim (one who submits) in every *Ummah* is the *Nabiyy* (prophet) or *Rasūl* (Messenger) himself to whom the *Shari‘ah* (religious code of guidance) is revealed through *Wahy* (revelation).

There could be a hint in the expression ‘first Muslim,’ towards the saying that the first to be created was the blessed *Nūr* (light) of the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*, after which the heavens and the earth and the rest of creation came into existence - as it appears in a *Hadīth* with the words: *أَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى نُورِي* (*Rūh al-Ma‘ānī*).

### One’s Burden of Sin Cannot Be Borne By Another

The disbelievers of Makkah, with *Walīd ibn Mughīrah* among them, used to say to the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* and to the Muslims in general that they should return to their faith and they will bear the burden of all their sins. This has been answered in the fourth verse (164). It was said: *قُلْ أَغْتَبِرُ اللَّهَ أَبْغَى رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ* Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*. He is being asked to tell them: ‘Do you want me that I too, like yourself, seek and find some other *Rabb*, other than Allah, when He is the Lord of everything?. This is error and straying which you should not expect me to accept. As for your saying that you will bear the burden of our sins, this is absurd in itself. A sin committed by a person will be written in that person’s record of deeds, and it will be he or she who will deserve its punishment. How can that sin be transferred to your account just by your saying so? And if the idea is that the sins will go in our account and in our Book of Deeds, but the punishment to be given against these will be borne by you, then, that idea is not valid either.’ The next sentence in the verse rejects it. It was said: *وَلَا تَنْزِرُوا وِزْرَةَ الَّذِينَ تَكْفُرُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُكْفِرُونَ* that is, (on the day of *Qiyāmah*) no

bearer of burden (of sin) shall bear the burden of another).

As for the disbelievers, this verse does answer their absurd saying in its own way. But, it also tells Muslims at large about the rule that they too should not take the matters of *Qiyāmah* on the analogy of their ways in the mortal world where one person commits a crime and succeeds in putting it on someone else - specially when the other person is willing to accept it. But, in the great Court of Allah, there is no room for it. There, the other person can never be caught for the sin committed by someone else. It is based on the authority of this verse that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that the child born out of wedlock will not be affected by the sin of his or her parents. (This *Hadīth* has been reported by Ḥakīm from Sayyidah ‘A’ishah رضى الله عنها, based on sound authority)

When Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه saw someone crying at the *Janāzah* of a deceased person, he said that the crying of the living causes punishment to the deceased. Ibn Abī Mulaykah says that, when he reported this saying to Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها, she said: You are reporting the saying of a person who never lies, nor can there be any doubt in his integrity. But, there are occasions when one does not hear right. In this matter, the decisive verdict of the Qur‘ān is sufficient for you: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى, that is, the sin of one person cannot be applied to another. So, how can the crying of a living person cause punishment to descend on a dead person just for no reason? (Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr)

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said that, finally they have to go to their Lord after all where they will find out the ultimate verdict on all their differences - which means that they would be better off keeping their verbal confrontation in check and devoting more to the end of things.

In the fifth (164) verse, Sūrah Al-An‘ām reaches its end at a comprehensive note of advice. It brings the past history of peoples and their times into focus and invites attention to a projection towards the future by saying: وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ (And it is He who made you viceregents of the earth and raised some of you in ranks over some others). Here, the word: خَلَائِفَ (*khalā’if*) is the plural form of *khalīfah* which means viceregent or deputy. The sense of the verse is:

It is Allah Ta‘ālā who has let you inhabit places occupied by peoples before you. There is no home, no land which you call your private property today, and believe to be so, which was not, only yesterday, under the ownership of other human beings like you. Allah Ta‘ālā has, by removing them, made you sit in their place. Then, worth keeping in mind all the time is the fact of life that everyone among you too is not alike. One is poor, the other is rich. One is low, the other is high. And equally obvious is the fact that, had being rich or being low been within one’s control, who would have chosen to remain poor and low? This distance among steps and this difference in ranks is knocking at your doors to tell you that this power, control and choice is in the hands of some other Being who can make anyone poor, if He so wills; make anyone rich, if He so wills; give honour to whom He wills and let whoever He wills be low.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: **لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ** (so that He may test you in what He has given you). It means: By making you take the place of others, and by making you owners of their wealth and property, and then, by keeping you at different steps in terms of honour and wealth, the very aim is to make you open your eyes to this framework of trial which seeks to determine your reaction to this phenomena that blessings which once belonged to past peoples have now been entrusted in your hands. To be seen is what it would be - that of gratitude and obedience, or that of ingratitude and disobedience?

At the conclusion of the fifth and the last (165) verse, the end of both these stances was made clear by saying: **إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ** (Surely, your Lord is swift in punishing - and surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful). In other words, it means: Your Lord is going to send His punishment on the disobedient soon - and for the obedient, He is Forgiving and Merciful.

Sūrah Al-An‘ām began with *Hamd* (the praise of Allah) and concluded on *Maghfirah* (the seeking of forgiveness from Allah). May Allah Ta‘ālā bless all of us with the *Taufiq* (ability bestowed by Allah) of *Hamd*, and honour us with *Maghfirah* from Him.

It appears in *Hadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Sūrah Al-An‘ām, the whole of it, was revealed at one time. Such was the majesty of its revelation that seventy thousand angels followed behind it

reciting *Tasbīh* (glorifying Allah). Therefore, Sayyidna Fārūq al-Ā‘zam said: Sūrah Al-An‘ām is one of the highly merited Sūrahs of the Holy Qur’an.

In some narrations, it has been reported from Sayyidnā ‘Alī رضي الله عنه that Allah Ta‘ālā would become the healer of the sick person over whom this Sūrah is recited.

وَأٰخِرُ دَعْوَانَا اِنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

The Commentary on  
Sūrah Al-An‘ām  
ends here